

**THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LOSS OF A SIBLING:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR
(Psychotherapy)**

in the

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
Department of Psychology
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

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DATE September, 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

More people than I can cite deserve to be mentioned here; for their support, understanding and inspiration.

In terms of the theme of this study it is perhaps appropriate to thank the ‘invisible’ people first because their place in the ‘shadows’ is easily overlooked and they seldom receive the recognition they deserve:

- The bereaved siblings for their courage and willingness to share their stories with me. Without their contribution this study would not have been possible;
- My siblings, for making me aware of what it means to be a sister;
- My husband for his support and for editing my manuscript;
- My sons, for their encouragement and faith in me;
- I would also like to thank the librarians at the Merensky Library, University of Pretoria, for all their assistance in helping me acquire material that I needed. No request was ever too much or too difficult for them. For this, I thank Lourett Visser, Marie Swanepoel and Annamarie Bezuidenhout for their efficient and tireless efforts in coming to my assistance. Their labours are appreciated;
- My friends and colleagues who understood and were prepared to listen when things got tough.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my Supervisors, Dr. Assie Gildenhuis (Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria) and Dr. Richard Alapack (Associate Professor, Psychology Institute, NTNU, Trondheim, Norway):

- Dr. Assie Gildenhuis for his support and keen interest in my theme. His measured comments and suggestions were more helpful than he can imagine;
- Dr. Richard Alapack for extending my knowledge in the realm of phenomenology, for his creativity and generous spirit in sharing so much of his own ideas on death and loss in general - a theme that is close to his heart.

Being in the privileged position of having two supervisors, I could not have hoped for a better team. Although the one was ‘near’ and the other very ‘far’ away, I always felt that both were right there with me. It has indeed been a great privilege to have worked with these two men, men whose contribution I greatly appreciate and who have enriched my study in many ways.

The experience of the loss of a sibling: A phenomenological study

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Abstract

The study of the loss of a sibling in mainstream bereavement literature has been largely neglected in psychology. This sentiment has often, and still continues, to be expressed by those outside and within the psychological field. The focus in the childhood bereavement literature has been on the loss of a parent and, in adulthood, on the loss of a child or of a spouse. Despite the growing interest in sibling loss in more recent times (since the 1980s), more specifically in childhood and adolescent sibling loss, in reality bereaved siblings remain “forgotten” and even marginalised.

The present study concerned the experience of the loss of a brother or sister in young adulthood, an area that has been largely neglected. The phenomenon was explored using a qualitative approach and employing the empirical phenomenological psychological research method as articulated by Amedeo Giorgi. In-depth interviews with three research participants, who were asked to describe their experience of the loss of their sibling, were used to gather the data. The emphasis was on *discovery*, on allowing the siblings to speak for themselves by posing an open-ended question rather than focusing on isolated aspects of the loss experience.

The general psychological structure revealed that the experience of the loss of a brother or sister evolves over time and cannot meaningfully be understood as an event that can be contained within a specified moment in time. The experience is a fundamentally relational and paradoxical phenomenon and is reflective of the context in which it occurs. With the loss, the sibling’s whole world changes in a very radical way. It is a triple loss: the loss of the brother or sister, the loss of the family unit and the “loss” of the parents as the siblings had known them. Initially bereaved siblings put aside their grief in an attempt to protect parents and significant others. A conspiracy of silence evolves which conceals their pain and as they continue with life as “normal” there is a deceptive belief of “coping well”, of personal stability. Yet internally the bereaved sibling struggles with intense emotions and a lonely struggle ensues. The lack of acknowledgement of the sibling’s grief by others compounds the sense of

isolation and alienation and he/she begins to feel like an “implicated alien”, a participant-spectator; part-of and also apart-from the grief situation. Finding a safe space to grieve is critical to bereaved siblings and when this is possible they are able to let go of their deep emotions and grieve the loss of their brother or sister. The loss of a sibling is the experience of losing various parts of the self and needing to reclaim and reintegrate the self.

The main contribution of this study can be described as providing insights concerning the complex, multi-layered and multi-dimensional process of this loss experience to clinicians and others who care for bereaved siblings. Where the extant psychoanalytic and object relations literature is willing to concede that a sibling relationship exists, screened behind parental relationships, the present study reveals that siblings have a unique relationship of their own and that the loss of this relationship demands radical mourning. This study also reveals that a death in the family is a fundamentally relational experience. The loss of a brother or sister and the loss of a child frequently overlap and tumble into each other and it is difficult to know for whom the sibling is grieving at any particular moment. Thus, grief over the loss of a brother or sister cannot be reduced to a purely intra-psychic or psycho-social process. The fact that sibling grief is not visible does not mean that it does not exist. Clinicians and caregivers need to be aware of the existential chaos, the trauma, and the ambiguous and paradoxical nature of the sorrow experienced by a sibling-who-loses-a-sibling.

Future research into the loss of a brother or sister beyond young and middle adulthood, an area that has also largely been neglected, would constitute an important contribution to the psychology of siblings and of sibling loss/bereavement throughout the life cycle. Also significant would be the exploration of what happens in the sibling group following the loss of one of their members.

Key Terms:

Siblings

Sibling Bond

Sibling Loss

Adult Sibling Loss

Parental Grief

Sorrow

Grief-process

Grief-work

Grief-therapy

Qualitative research

Phenomenology

Existentialism

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Bereaved siblings have been described as silent, forgotten, “invisible” mourners. This study seeks to explore the phenomenon of sibling loss. Specifically it attempts to clarify the range of *meanings* that a sibling gives to the experience of losing a brother or sister to death. Using an existential-phenomenological research program, I will enter the *lived* world of surviving siblings, give them a voice and also contribute to an understanding of their world.

The sibling relationship, apart from a clinical interest in sibling rivalry, has not enjoyed a prominent position in psychology. In our western culture, the role of “siblinghood” is under-emphasised. However, the experiential facts remain: the sibling relationship is a powerful and intimate one; an egalitarian bond that under normal circumstances endures for life. Profoundly complex psychological issues surround the loss of a brother or sister. Burning questions motivate this research: How does one live through the experience of losing such a unique participant in one’s life? What is it like to lose someone who has been part of your world from childhood - a brother or sister who shares the same parents, speaks your language, affirms you in many ways; one who may have the same inflection of voice and even look like you? In this study I explore and explicate the meaning of sibling loss in young adulthood as it unfolds within the context of the family.

1.1. Motivation for the study

Arguably most social scientific research has roots in one’s personal life. In my case, two realities, separate yet profoundly related, ground my interest in, and sensitivity to the phenomenon. Firstly, I am a survivor who has experienced the personal loss of a brother (stillborn); secondly my role as psychotherapist unwittingly invited the phenomenon into my professional domain. Thus, the importance of the phenomenon has impressed itself upon my psyche as sister/daughter/mother and has increased my awareness as a clinician.

In psychotherapy, I have been a witness to the place that sibling grief occupies in the emotional lives of survivors. I have been struck by *knotted grief*, the tendency of adults to conceal their grief and to minimise the impact of the loss of a brother or sister. Although they come to therapy suffering, they rarely mention their sibling's death as the presenting or central issue. Spontaneous stories of loss, if told at all, typically come to the fore well into the therapeutic process. Even then, the narration is often unemotional, as if the death belongs merely to the *historical past*. Frequently adult clients do not mention the loss at all unless specifically questioned about it.

What do these clinical facts mean? Why do some siblings themselves apparently push their sadness aside and “pretend” that life is the same as before? Have they learned to live with the loss? Or have these surviving siblings simply successfully “resolved” their grief and now suffer from unrelated issues? The correlative theoretical question is: Why has the discipline of psychology slipped into such a long silence about this loss-predicament?

Reflection upon the literature gives initial hints at answers. Certain losses are acknowledged as prominently significant: the life events of losing a parent, child or spouse are rarely ignored. Clients recall them spontaneously as life-altering happenings. Losing a brother or a sister to death, however, does not seem to have a place in the life of the survivor; seems to be relegated to “no man's land” or is overshadowed by the intense grief of parents and other significant others in the life of the deceased sibling. Once the subject is broached, however, grief wells up so strongly in some clients that it can scarcely be contained. Some speak out about the loss of their brother or sister for the first time - to anybody - even though many years have elapsed since the death occurred. Vividly recalled and intensely painful memories then become a cardinal therapeutic issue. Paradoxically, some clients continue to minimise the event, almost dismiss it, preferring to focus instead on more “pressing” and immediate issues.

A privileged listener to this unique death drama within the therapeutic context, I have witnessed its significance. Life-long scars follow in its wake; scars that need to be converted into marks. Seeking help, so I might aid in that conversion, I turned to the grief literature, to popular self-help writings on grief/loss and to psychotherapeutic texts. Above all, I discovered the neglect. Sibling loss is too little understood and consequently too little mourned.

This venture into the literature was fruitful. What I found present and what was absent were equally revealing. Like several other research workers, I learned that siblings who had lost a brother or sister in childhood feel very alone in their grief. Textbooks and manuals in the general bereavement literature (Bowlby, 1980; Parkes, 1972/1975; Raphael, 1984) either lack information on, or make only brief references to sibling loss. It is a chant that is often repeated: the bereaved parents remain the main focus when a child's death occurs. With few exceptions (Davies, 1999; Pape, 1999, 2002), both clinical practice and academic research deal with isolated variables related to sibling loss (e.g. reactions to the loss, circumstances of the death, closeness of the pre-death relationship, time elapsed since the death), and do not adequately reflect the whole experience of the loss of a brother or sister.

The fragmented corpus reveals a gap; a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the sibling loss experience persists. Only a comprehensive study will give a voice to the surviving brothers and

sisters. My task was to find the adequate theoretical vision that would promote the exploration of sibling loss and identify its place within psychology.

1.2 Overview of the Study

Over the past two-and-half decades (since the 1980s) researchers have attempted to break the silence surrounding the loss of a brother or sister. A burgeoning number of research projects on sibling loss have emerged. Later I will address that literature. However, from the outset it must be stated that, with few exceptions, the story of sibling loss has infrequently been obtained from siblings themselves. The first person perspective has seldom been used. Scant research has been conducted on the psychological *meanings* that such a loss has for surviving siblings. The gap between the lived reality and research has not yet been bridged.

“What does it mean to lose a brother or sister?”; “What is the lived experience like?”; “How does the grief process evolve over time?”; are questions that need to be answered.

Generally psychological understandings of loss and grief are based on theories of attachment and separation and these have also been applied to the understanding of sibling loss. In the context of bonding, Sigmund Freud's notion of “besetzung” – “attachment”/“bond”/“tie” - is pivotal to the understanding of grief and sorrow. Freud (1917/1957) also started the psychiatric-psychological investigation of mourning (i.e. grief) and was the first to identify the value of the “work” of mourning, while John Bowlby (1973, 1979, 1980) highlighted separation with its implications of anxiety and saw loss as a special form of separation anxiety. Other theorists, Klein (1940/1991) and Lindemann (1944/1981), also provide valuable insights into how the loss of a significant other is experienced. However, while aspects of the loss experience of siblings are evident in these theories, none in effect adequately conceptualise the full experience of sibling loss, which, as already mentioned, is unique.

In the context of the family, some researchers have highlighted the impact on bereaved siblings of the parents' grief with its implications of the intense and protracted mourning of parents: lack of personal resources to support remaining siblings (Rosen, 1984-85; Davies, 1999); changes in the parents' way of relating to surviving siblings (Cain, *et al.*, 1964; Krell & Rabkin, 1979); differential grief of family members and the emergence of conflict and additional stress arising from this (Rosenblatt, *et al.*, 1991; Gilbert, 1996). These factors were found to impact on the outcome of sibling grief. Similarly, the effect of other potentially supportive relationships, for example, peers, other adults, teachers and professionals, has been examined in terms of whether they help or hinder the adjustment of bereaved siblings following the loss of a brother or sister.

Davies' (1999) model of sibling loss, relating more specifically to the loss of a brother or sister during childhood, i.e. “I hurt inside”; “I don't understand”; “I don't belong”; and “I'm not enough”, provides a more comprehensive understanding of this loss experience. She notes that all of these responses are affected in turn by individual, environmental and situational factors. This model provides a map that can be used by caregivers in their attempts to understand and support bereaved siblings. Another map is provided by Pape (1999, 2002), one which focuses on the textural meanings, the undulations of this uncharted terrain, and the temporal qualities of the lived experience of losing a sibling in young to middle adulthood.

While the contributions of these and other theorists and clinicians provide a map to explore what it means to lose a significant other, in the present study every effort was made to remain open-ended and unbiased in my approach. By bracketing all preconceived ideas and bereavement theories, I hoped to approach the phenomenon freshly and to be receptive to new discoveries that would extend beyond the definitions of psychoanalytic, object-relations and attachment theories. The intention was not to seek theoretical confirmation, but to allow the phenomenon to reveal itself.

Willingness to move beyond the defined limits of theory was highlighted by the existential-phenomenological perspective that enables us to envisage death and mourning as a profound and lasting transformation of existence. Based on his own suffering, the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, provides us with a vision beyond the predetermined paradigm of ego structure and its definitions. Focus on the phenomenon revealed that the study concurs with Freud's concept of the mood of “mourning” (grief in today's parlance) and Kierkegaard's concept of “sorrowing” as part of the human condition. Both Freud and Kierkegaard recognise that grief is normal, that it is not time-bound, and both acknowledge the need to sorrow through our suffered losses.

Using an existential-phenomenological perspective was helpful where, with the spirit of Heidegger, Levinas, and Kierkegaard, an attempt was made to explore and understand the lived experience of sibling loss. Heidegger's concept of being-there-in-the-world-with-others suggests that man and world are interrelated. We cannot speak about the one without referring to the other. Thus, with the loss of a significant other, Dasein not only experiences himself differently, but his world is also changed. Revealing the structure of the phenomenon of sibling loss facilitates an understanding of the fundamentally relational aspect of this loss experience. It is not simply a matter of individual pain. The loss has reverberations that affect many others. Finding a space amongst all the torn relationships in which to grieve generates existential confusion and frequently delays the sibling's mourning process.

The present thesis comprises seven chapters. Following Chapter One, with its introduction to the study, Chapter Two provides an overview of the state of the literature on sibling loss and highlights the fact that it is an experience that, perhaps more than any other loss, is too little acknowledged and too little mourned. This provides the basis for the literature review that follows.

The literature review is divided into two chapters.

Chapter Three concerns itself with the sibling *bond* and unravels some of the dimensions of this unique relationship as revealed in the literature.

Chapter Four presents a selective rather than an exhaustive literature review of sibling *loss*. Although the present study specifically concerns the experience of sibling loss in young adulthood, there is a paucity of literature in this field, and studies relating to the loss of a brother or sister in childhood and adolescence, on which the bulk of the literature is based, are therefore also included. The respective themes of individual, familial and societal aspects of the loss are then discussed and these are grounded in the sibling bond. This section focuses on the research (both quantitative and qualitative) that has addressed the phenomenon. The chapter's contribution is, in a sense, limited in that it succeeds only in demonstrating the paucity of research that adequately reaches the lived-world of bereaved siblings. The meaning of the experience can be understood only when we know its full context. When we discuss the loss experience simply in terms of individual, familial or societal *reactions* to the loss, the meaning for the bereaved sibling is lost. Having encountered death, we need to know *how* the sibling experiences himself or herself in his or her world and *what* gives rise to this. Awareness of context gives meaning to, and even changes the meaning of the loss experience for the individual. Taking into account that sibling loss is a lived relational phenomenon, this Chapter will illuminate how the studies have bypassed and neglected the *interactive* and *processional* nature of sibling loss. This has important implications for research methodology, and the need for an alternative research method becomes apparent in this chapter.

Chapter Five deals with the methodological orientation and the rationale of the empirical phenomenological research approach, showing how the data are obtained and how the implicit structure is made explicit. The siblings' stories *are* the data and "fidelity" to the participants' accounts remains paramount. My task, as researcher, is to highlight its sense and to draw from it psychological insights. The intention is not to provide causative information or to make statistical deductions. My academic purpose is to conduct empirical psychological research; my clinical intention is to share insights with therapists and caregivers who inevitably will deal with a sibling grieving the loss of a brother or sister, or a parent who is grieving the loss of his or her child. Beyond this, there is the hope, as expressed by others (Kubler-Ross, 1969/1985, 1974), that our society may relearn that death is an

essential part of life, and that open discussion about grief, mourning and bereavement may contribute to a more accepting attitude in the community.

Chapter Six deals with the actual study; the Investigation and Findings. The final chapter, Chapter Seven, includes a discussion of the results and, where relevant, a dialogue between the findings of the present study and the existing literature on sibling loss in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this unique loss experience. The chapter includes a concise description of the gestalt of sibling loss followed by the pattern of sibling grief and implications for support and psychotherapy for bereaved siblings, as these emerge from the study. Professional and cultural conceptions and perceptions of the sibling bond and sibling loss and the extent to which these beliefs contribute to the conspiracy of silence surrounding the loss of a brother or sister in young adulthood, are also briefly discussed. The chapter ends with a revisiting of the method used: the implications of the study; its limitations; and suggestions for further research.

For ease of reading, and also because the participants in the study were all female, I have chosen to use “she” and “her” when referring to the bereaved sibling in the Investigation and Findings (i.e. Chapter Six) and in the Discussion (i.e. Chapter Seven) sections of the thesis. This in no way intends to exclude the male surviving sibling and may apply equally to the other gender. When writing about the sibling who died, “he” or “she” and “his” or “her” will be used. It is indeed important to encompass both brother and sister in the text when referring to the one who is mourned. For the purpose of confidentiality, fictitious names have been assigned to *all* the participants who volunteered to participate in the study as well as to *all* members of their family that are mentioned in the interviews or written descriptions.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of the present study is to understand the *meanings* of the experience of sibling loss, to discover and describe the structure and essence of the phenomenon and to give a voice to surviving siblings. In so doing, I hope to contribute to knowledge in the field of psychology and enhance clinicians’ awareness of the significance of this loss experience thereby also contributing to psychotherapy and bereavement counselling.

CHAPTER TWO

SIBLING LOSS

Too Little Acknowledged; Too Little Mourned

Shakespeare has Hamlet's mother say:

“Thou know'st 'tis common; all that live must die.” (Shakespeare, 1973: 49)

Equally common, despite technological and medical advancements, is that bereavement through death, at whatever age it occurs, has to be faced as a fact of life. Yet, as expressed by Lily Pincus (1974/1976), however honestly it is faced, bereavement brings about a crisis of loss, probably the most severe crisis in human existence. In this situation of inevitability and crisis, what happens to bereaved siblings within the family? How are they able to grieve the loss of their brother or sister? The following section provides a brief overview of the state of the literature on sibling loss and highlights that this experience is too little acknowledged and, therefore, too little mourned.

The death of children and young adults is a worldwide, daily, traumatic occurrence. In South Africa the high accident and crime rate and the devastation of AIDS are constant and persistent. The loss of young people on both sides of the divide during the apartheid era lingers in the psyches not only of mothers and fathers but also in the lives of bereaved siblings. The phenomenon of dying children does not discriminate among our citizens in terms of race, colour or creed. Professionals in all disciplines repeatedly encounter this phenomenon. Handle it we must; for better or worse, we do. The deeper our understanding and the better our knowledge, the more we can offer to survivors.

Mourning over death and especially the death of a child, is a theme as ancient as the human community. With Freud (1917/1957), however, grief entered as a theme into medical-social scientific literature. Pertinent to this study, the death of a child usually means that a brother or sister is left to grieve, often as an isolated, forgotten mourner. Current social scientific literature on grief and family dynamics shrouds in silence the meaning of the experience of sibling loss, or subsumes it under the general and universal experience of loss. Indeed, we do not even have a nuanced, integrated psychology of siblings. On the contrary, the sibling relationship is marginalised. The objective of this study is to explore and clarify these neglected, understudied phenomena; to join the chorus of voices that over the past two and a half decades have begun to address these gaps.

What basic insight into the theme authorises the previous assertions?

The quantitative literature, and even the sparse qualitative literature, remains on the edge, too far removed from the raw experience as it is lived, concerned more with facts than with meanings. A relevant investigation into the significance of sibling loss and grief requires entering the *lived world* of the survivors. Thus, I adopt an existential-phenomenological approach to tap into the issues in question.

A review of the bereavement literature reveals a gratifying increase in research articles on sibling loss since the 1980s. This trend seems to run parallel to the interest taken by many extra-psychological disciplines in the significance of the “lateral” or horizontal relationships between siblings across the life span. A similar interest seems to have been generated amongst psychologists, because they began to study the sibling relationship as an important bond in its own right (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Cicirelli, 1982, 1995; Dunn, 1985; Dunn & Kendrick, 1982; Lamb & Sutton-Smith, 1982; Schachter & Stone, 1987). Currently, it is recognised that one’s relationship with one’s brother or sister constitutes a significant and direct interpersonal relationship, *a-part-of* but also *apart-from* the child’s relationship with parents.

What has triggered this new focus on sibling loss? The Swiss-born psychiatrist, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, (deceased, September, 2004), pioneered the holding of conversations with individuals who were dying, first with adults and eventually with children. Although she encountered tremendous resistance, she persisted and in time she overcame not only medical taboos against discussing death with dying patients, but also helped establish Hospice care in the United States and gave permission to an entire generation and its successors to speak openly about our greatest fear - death.

Her remarkable work and writings (1969/1985; 1974; 1982) also inspired a generation of kindred spirits. As a result, many bereavement studies emanated from a growing interest by hospital staff in the psychic health of dying children and a concern about the effects on the siblings who were left behind. As noted by Vande Kemp (1999:355) these investigations were spearheaded mainly by pastors, nurses, social workers, psychiatrists and sociologists. To a lesser extent, psychologists also became involved. Many of the studies on sibling loss dealt with the death of a brother or sister from cancer, those suffering from cystic fibrosis, leukaemia, and other life-threatening and chronic conditions where death was anticipated. Healthcare practitioners who had regular contact with patients and their parents over a period of time, realised that the healthy siblings also needed to be included in the caregiver’s discussions with parents. The predicament of the sibling became part of the wider issue of death-in-the-family.

However, in the everyday, extra-hospital situation of sudden, accidental or unexpected deaths, parents and siblings were left unsupported and floundering. Some of these survivors found their way to the

psychologist's or psychiatrist's office suffering from behaviour problems or incapacitating symptoms of despair, panic and/or depression. Not surprisingly, therefore, psychiatric studies have been inclined to emphasise the *pathological* aspects of sibling loss. Many of the earliest writings on the theme (mostly psychoanalytic) focus on the *effect* of *childhood* sibling loss on *adult* patients who have undergone treatment for psychiatric disturbance (Rosenzweig, 1943; Pollock, 1962, 1972; Hilgard, 1969).

Correlatively, academic psychologists have paid scant attention to loss and mourning as normative events. Rosen (1986: 8) notes: "sibling loss has not been given the attention it deserves in the psychological literature...". As recently as 1999, Vande Kemp averred that few insights into sibling bereavement have come from psychologists.

A significant finding of the literature search is the multidimensional nature of the sibling bond. Equally important, the review poses a *methodological challenge*. Grasping what the loss of a sibling *really* means seems insurmountably complex. Not only is each individual unique in terms of how he or she experiences and deals with grief, but the developmental and cognitive levels of surviving siblings vary; each sibling's relationship with the deceased is different, and the circumstances of the death differ. In addition, it has become increasingly apparent that the loss does not occur in a vacuum (Cain *et al.*, 1964; Coleman & Coleman, 1984; Rosen, 1984-1985, 1986; Davies, 1999) and that the individual who is mourning also lives in a family, in a neighbourhood, a community, a society. Reactions of family members, of others, and societal attitudes towards death and bereavement, impact both upon the surviving sibling's lived experience of the death and loss, and on the opportunity to carry out the 'work' of mourning. Cain *et al.* (1964) succinctly enumerate the multiple variables that interact and subtly influence the surviving sibling's reaction to the loss of a brother or sister. These were found to include:

“the nature of the death; the age and characteristics of the child who died; the child's degree of actual involvement in his sibling's death; the child's pre-existing relationship to the dead sibling; the immediate impact of the death upon the parents; the parent's handling of the initial reactions of the surviving child; the reactions of the community; the death's impact on the family structure; the availability to the child and the parents of various 'substitutes'; the parents' enduring reactions to the child's death; major concurrent stresses upon the child and his family; and the developmental level of the surviving child at the time of the death...”
(Cain *et al.*, 1964: 750)

Compounding the above complexities is confusion about an operational definition. In our postmodern world, what constitutes a siblingship? Blood-bonds do not exhaust the meaning. The term is more broadly applied not only in certain cultural and religious groups but also because of the increasing breakdown of the nuclear family and the consequent emergence of "blended" and "reconstituted"

families (step- and half-siblings). Finally, infertile couples exercise several options including enlisting sperm/egg donors and the adoption or fostering of children.

Since the meaning of “sibling” has become increasingly ambiguous, applying an operational definition of what constitutes “*sibling* loss” is difficult for mainstream social scientists. In partial reaction, and possibly also because most psychological developmental theories end with adolescence, researchers have focused narrowly on the bereavement of children and adolescents, but have paid scant attention to the predicament of adult survivors.

Robinson and Mahon (1997) recognised the need for conceptual clarity about the characteristics of sibling bereavement beyond adolescence. The global social climate demands it. The needs of a great number of adults whose siblings are dying, or have died, from AIDS, especially in a country like South Africa, must be addressed by medical scientists and psychotherapists/counsellors dealing with grief. While it is beyond the scope of this study, the need to attend to grief *per se*, and to the loss of family members, magnifies as the world also copes with recurring natural disasters (tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, etc.), and the escalating man-made disasters that spin from the cycles of revenge and counter-revenge incessantly encircling our planet and threatening the lives of the many who die “before their time.”

By applying the Wilsonian Method of concept analysis, Robinson and Mahon (1997: 491-493) isolated three critical attributes which distinguish sibling bereavement as a unique phenomenon: (a) the relationship between the deceased and surviving sibling exists in the context of the family and includes shared experiences and history as significant components; (b) physical separation through death from a sibling; and (c) the death of the sibling alters the *externally defined* role(s) of the surviving sibling - for example, becoming an “only child” is a dramatic and an especially difficult role change.

The major strength of empirical scientific studies is the capacity to isolate and manipulate one or two variables that have been thought to influence the outcome of sibling grief. For instance, shared life space and sibling bereavement responses (Davies, 1988), the effects of time on sibling bereavement (Hogan, 1988; Davies, 1991a), the developmental level of the surviving sibling (Balk, 1983a; Hogan & DeSantis, 1992), self-concept perceptions (Balk, 1983b), things that help and hinder sibling bereavement (Hogan & DeSantis, 1994). The intention is to determine those factors that most strongly affect siblings’ grief, in order to reduce as much as possible negative effects of losing a brother or sister. These studies have contributed critical information about aspects of sibling bereavement and helped to dispel some of the misconceptions surrounding children and loss, viz. that children are less affected in a direct way; that very young children do not “understand” and, therefore, do not grieve;

the myth that children “get over things easily”; that siblings were constantly fighting and arguing and would, therefore, not miss each other. However, through her extensive research, Davies (1999) discovered that such findings have often been contradictory or inconclusive in identifying which variables are the most influential in predicting bereavement outcome. She maintains that sibling bereavement cannot be studied apart from the context in which it occurs (1999: 197). There is no simple cause and effect relationship between any of the identified variables and sibling bereavement, she concludes, and a causal model cannot take into account the fundamental interconnectedness of the sibling's world.

What is the bridge between this work and the present study? Evidence shows that quantitative research, which pivots upon the manipulation of clear and distinct variables, is stymied by a host of life-world complexities. The splintering and isolating of variables continues to generate contradictory findings or results of limited scope. Clearly, the phenomena under investigation do not interface easily with institutionalised criteria of isolation, replication, prediction and control. Indeed, it would appear that the very entrapment that keeps the bereaved sibling isolated is also evident in the methods used to understand sibling loss, reflected in their quest for totality and closure.

Thus, a move away from a mainstream experimental design is warranted. The above complexities revolve around the question of how to enter into the life-world of the grieving sibling: of how to tap profoundly personal - profoundly painful, almost taboo - experiences and their meanings. Although each death is unique, this does not mean that it eludes scientific study. A researcher can tap into its particular context, its situation, its configuration, draw out its meanings and then make them explicit. If this content area is to be thoroughly and rigorously scientifically canvassed, an appropriate qualitative method will have to be employed. To underwrite that method, a different vision is necessary: a shift in conceptual paradigm.

The shift has already begun. Several researchers have introduced qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured questionnaires and interviews in an attempt to expand our knowledge base of this complex phenomenon. The case study, an inherently qualitative method, continues to be applied with a shift from the emphasis on pathology (depression) to a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of sibling loss. A classical example of such a study is the self-analysis by Engel (1975), extending over a period of ten years, in which he describes his mourning and anniversary reactions over the loss of his twin brother in adulthood.

The research of Davies (1999), extending over 15 years and drawn from a non-clinical population, is to date the most comprehensive study of sibling loss in *childhood*. It offers context-rich findings about this complex phenomenon. Using grounded theory analysis she synthesises the findings of all her

work and develops a comprehensive conceptualisation of childhood sibling loss. The themes she has examined include siblings of all ages whose brothers or sisters died in *childhood* from a variety of causes and she provides an exploration of the immediate and long-term effects of the loss of a sibling. She also examines the contextual variables: i.e., situational, individual and environmental, which impact on the loss experience (Davies. 1999: 200). Her data depicting the most salient features of childhood sibling bereavement: “I’m sad”, “I don't understand”, “I don't belong”, and “I’m not enough”, provide a basic model for those who care for bereaved siblings. Her solid qualitative research project demonstrates both the rigour and the value of using a more comprehensive and contextualised approach to the multi-dimensional predicament of sibling bereavement. However, the psychological significance of sibling loss and the meaning-structure of survivors, particularly those who have lost a sibling in adulthood, still remain to be explored. Motivated by Davies' solid work, I take the next step. I use an existential-phenomenological platform that authorises an open-ended investigation. Specifically, I frame a research design that allows the definitions and meanings of siblings, siblingship and sibling bereavement to flow from the research situation itself. The design allows the surviving siblings themselves to reveal the context and the nature of the relationship to the deceased sibling.

Since siblings who have lost a sibling to death make up the subjects of this research, it is fitting to trace briefly the development of the place of siblings and of sibling bereavement in psychology. This review is representative but not exhaustive. It presents a broad outline not only of the dilemma of depth versus breadth that face research workers in the field, but also sounds the “cries” heard in the literature relating to this phenomenon.

The unique sibling bond is ripe with potential for individual growth and equally for disturbance, for love and hate, for competition and collaboration. It has been richly portrayed in Bible stories, fairy tales (Bettelheim, 1976). Themes of envy, jealousy and competition are reflected in the stories of Cain and Abel, of Joseph and his brothers, of Cinderella and her sisters, while the loving, supportive and restitutive power of the sibling bond is very richly portrayed in fairy tales such as Hansel and Gretel, and Brother and Sister. The implication of these narratives is that, whether positive or negative, the significance and impact of the sibling relationship is powerful.

Particularly in today's Western world of two working parents, single-parent homes, “latch-key kids”, etc., siblings often spend more time with each other than they do with their parents. As the face of the family continues to change, siblings may be the most constant companions in the child's world. Often the important developmental task of the transition from the vertical (parent/adult-child) relationships to horizontal (peer/sibling) relationships is facilitated by sibling interaction; a sense of “we-ness” (Sullivan, 1953) may develop first within the sibling group and then in peer relationships with same-

age members of the extended family and friends. Thus, the many meanings that a brother or sister has for a sibling have implications not only for development but also for the grief of bereaved siblings. However, as indicated above, the peer/sibling world has been under-emphasised in psychology.

The great complexity and distinctive emotional power of the sibling bond have gradually been gaining greater recognition and acknowledgement. The relationship begins with the birth of the second child and ends only with the death of one of the siblings. A brother or a sister can contribute to the harmony or conflict within the family but they can also bring each other tremendous meaning and value throughout the life span. Typically, sibling relationships fluctuate and change over time with child and adolescent siblings having more intimate daily contact at home (non-voluntary relationship) and adult siblings having less contact but in most instances still choosing (voluntary relationship) to participate in both shared and non-shared environments (Moss & Moss, 1986; Cicirelli, 1982, 1995). It is a relationship that is characterised not only by rivalry, competition, jealousy and envy, but also by feelings of loyalty, caring, hero-worship and a sense of mutual destiny (Bank & Kahn, 1982).

Yet, in our scientifically based western culture with our psychological preconceptions of the family, the *meaning* of the sibling bond has been ignored; too often, the sorrow that accompanies such a loss is negated. Consequently, sibling loss is regarded as “secondary” to other more important or “direct” losses. Clearly, this is not true for all siblings and for all cultural groups. Etched at the heart of Greek-driven Western thinking, is not only the tragic fate of Oedipus, but also the defiance of Antigone, the sister who affirms her entitlement to mourn the loss of her brother and to bury him. Nevertheless, siblings remain “forgotten grievers”, harbouring “hidden grief”, “silent sorrow” or “prohibited mourning” (Rosen, 1984-1985, 1986; Vande Kemp, 1999).

This has implications for the opportunity to do the grief work necessary for healing to take place. Experiences of loss not mourned and grief unexpressed mean that the healing of painful memories cannot take place. The passage of objective clock time accomplishes nothing. It only leaves half-closed wounds or wounds half-open. As stated by Weizman and Kamm (1985: 186): “It is not the passage of time itself that is healing. It is the *expression* of grief over a period of time that leads to the healing of painful memories.”

To repeat: in South Africa the loss of children is a daily and traumatic occurrence. According to STATS SA approximately 65,000 children (i.e. up to the age of 19 years), and 63,000 young adults (20 to 29 years of age) died during the year 2002 and the figures continue to escalate. Either as parents or as siblings, many of us will be touched more or less directly by such a loss in our lives. Psychotherapists and others in the caring professions have been listening to, and will continue to hear, stories of mothers and fathers who have lost a daughter or a son to death. The death of a child, at

whatever age it occurs, is generally recognised as one of the most distressing and incapacitating of all losses and one that is extremely difficult to come to terms with. This loss is particularly painful and resonates with our deepest feelings, and touches us all. Socially, the pain of a parent, particularly of a bereaved mother, has been recognised and acknowledged as profound. Even in Victorian times, a period when the loss of children was a common occurrence, the loss of a child was recognised as one that was difficult to accept. For example, on hearing of the death of a friend's baby from scarlet fever in 1893, Lady Desborough knew that no words of consolation could comfort the desolate mother:

“I think there must be no heartache like that of losing a child - for lovers love, childrens love, husbands love, are none of them so deep and high as mothers love - it is the highest shape love wears on earth ... Poor Mary, what can we do - what can *anything ever* do, to make it well for her?” (In Jalland, 1996: 119).

The intense grief of parents over the loss of a child is appropriate and not in question here. It is not a question of comparisons but rather an attempt to honour the mystery and power of the sibling bond - a bond that needs to be understood and not ignored -- and to identify a place for siblings and for sibling loss in psychology. It is also a response to the call of various caregivers involved with bereaved siblings and their families for contributions from psychologists towards a deeper, contextualised and professional understanding of the lived experience of sibling loss.

To summarise the grief picture: it is acknowledged that the loss of a child generates intense and very deep suffering for parents, rends the fabric of the family and also impacts on wider social structures (extended family, friends and even teachers and neighbours). However, until fairly recently, the grief and thanatology literature, as well as the psychological literature (apart from focusing on depression in bereaved siblings), has overlooked the fact that when a parent loses a child, the children in that family also suffer a unique loss of their own. In the face of the parents' intense grief and the family reorganisation and reintegration, the fact that the surviving sibling(s) is/are also mourning seems to be forgotten.

This raises an important question in terms of theory and support and/or clinical practice: although siblings have been losing brothers and sisters to death since the beginning of time, "why so little thinking on the theme of sibling loss?". It is perhaps not so difficult to appreciate why this is so. On the developmental and relational levels, it would appear that a number of factors apply: the risk of acknowledging intense feelings of helplessness and loss in a child and a feeling that children should be protected; the appearance that they grieve less intensely; and that they seem less capable of conceptualising the irrevocable nature of death.

On the theoretical level, one of the explanations for this may be that we do not have an integrated psychological theory of siblings. Significant in this respect is the experience described by Bank and

Kahn (1982: 5) who, when they began their study with siblings, commented: “When we tried to exercise our skills as psychologists in the emotional, and largely irrational, realm of siblings we felt as if we were in a foreign country without a map.” What are the possible roots of this neglect? The shadow of Western dualism unfolds sweepingly over all scientific pursuits. It has enveloped both mainstream experimental positivistic psychology and the radical psychoanalytic challenge to it. In essence, this means that a vision of the primacy of whole relationships - that man is a network of relations - is absent from the scientific landscape. Western dualism starts with isolated variables and tries to put “Humpty-Dumpty” back together again. Conceptually there has never been room in our Western culture for the sibling bond as a powerful reality.

It has also been argued that the emphasis in psychoanalytic, object relations and attachment theories on the earliest phases of human development and the exclusive focus on the mother-child relationship as the main, if not the *only*, influence on the organisation and development of an individual's personality and the evolving sense of self, has possibly contributed to the perception that the “horizontal” sibling relationships are secondary and relatively unimportant when compared to the “vertical” (Brown, 1998) relationships between child and parents. In the same vein there is the perception that siblings may also be less affected in a *direct* way by the loss of a brother or sister. While most theorists recognise that parent-child relationships are fundamental to human development, there is ample evidence from lived experiences and from clinical practice to suggest that the link between siblings and the impact that they have on each other's lives can be just as real and powerful. From discussions with siblings, it is significant to note that even when family relationships are optimal for development, siblings in and of themselves influence each other (either positively or negatively) simply because of who the siblings happen to be. Yet in the psychological literature the sibling is usually seen primarily as a rival for the mother's attention and affection (Freud), as an opponent to be overcome (Adler), or as a substitute attachment figure and “care-giving other” (Bowlby) largely as a result of “failed dependency” and deficient early “holding” (Winnicott, 1960/1990) experiences in the mother-infant relationship. The implication is that the sibling relationship is a secondary and, therefore, less significant one. Psychologists have only just begun to address the confusion and neglect in the literature relating to siblings and sibling loss.

In order to establish a context for the theme of the lived experience of the loss of a brother or sister, we need to understand the nature of the sibling bond. I will therefore first discuss the place of the sibling bond in psychology and look at the perspectives of different theorists as they relate to siblings, in an attempt to unravel the sibling bond. Thereafter, a review of the literature on the loss of a sibling will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW : PART ONE
THE SIBLING BOND

3. Introduction

It is appropriate to unravel this complex loss of one's brother or sister. The psychological literature on the sibling bond, as already mentioned, is sparse and in its sparseness slanted. Remarkably, this theory-rich discipline simply lacks a nuanced understanding of siblings apart from the parent-child bond, as if sibling ties are derived solely from parental relationships. Probing this oversight of an important life-world relationship is a pivotal theme of this study.

Loss presupposes an attachment (Freud, 1917/1957; Bowlby, 1979, 1980). Thus, articulating the importance of bonding provides the necessary context for examining the theme of sibling loss. In the case of the sibling relationship one may more accurately speak of “attachments”, as over the life span the distinctive feature of this unique relationship is a multiplicity of relationships with one's brother or sister and complex ties to the shared parents.

First a few comments on the meaning of the word “bond”. Part of Freud's pioneering work was to introduce the term into psychology. He used the richly nuanced German word “besetzung” to capture the multidimensional nature of human bonding. “Besetzung” means bond, link, tie, ... *investment* (as someone invests capital) and occupation (the force with which an army occupies a country). Freud is referring not only to the intimate bond of the infant to the mother, the investment in a cause, the embrace of adult love, but also to the fist shaken in anger/hatred. By describing the vicissitudes of the drive (*trieb*), Freud provides a roadmap of human development. Likewise, he demonstrates that the formation of a *group* is a matter of attachment, one in which members bond with one another in their shared bond with the leader of the group (in this case the parents). In terms of dealing with loss and grieving, he articulated the structure of grief-work. The bereaved must hyper-invest in order to de-link in service of re-bonding. In the English Standard Edition of Freud's works, his down-to-earth language has been changed in favour of the Greek terms: cathexis (“καθεξις”, a holding; retention), hyper-cathexis, de-cathexis, re-cathexis. This distortion has contributed to depicting Freud as a medical positivist and has detracted from the insights that could be gained from his reflections on loss, grief and depression (mourning and melancholia).

Developmental psychology has appropriated the term to characterise the close mother-child relationship. Bank and Kahn (1982) also refer to the sibling attachment as a “bond”. The definition of the term “bond” provides some clues as to the appropriateness of referring to the attachments formed

by siblings as “bonds”. The Pocket Oxford Dictionary (1984) defines “bond” as “a thing or force that unites or restrains”; “linkage of atoms in a molecule”; “hold or tie together”. “Bondage” has the meaning of “slavery”; “confinement, subjection to constraint or influence.” Bonds paradoxically unite and restrain. In the evolving self, they influence and constrain. Part of the mystery of the sibling relationship is that, like the parent-child bond, relationships between brothers and sisters cannot be dissolved. Siblings are bound to each other for life.

Turning to the dictionary definition we find that the term “sibling” is not even mentioned in the earlier editions of the Concise Oxford Dictionary. One entry was found in the 1952 edition: i.e. “sib” defined concisely as “related” or “akin.” “Brother” and “Sister” are respectively defined as “*Son* of same parents” and “*Daughter* of same parents” (my italics) thereby emphasizing the parent-child bond and ignoring the *relationship between* brothers and sisters. In the 1984 edition of The Concise Oxford Dictionary two brief entries are found: i.e. *sib = sibling*, and *sibling = one of two or more children having one or both parents in common*. The Greek word for brothers and sisters, “adelphoi” (“αδελφοί”), also identifies siblings by biological criteria using the maternal line as the main criterion: i.e. “*of or from the same womb*.”

A more comprehensive definition can be found in The World Book Dictionary (1988): i.e. “*sib*” - *related by blood; closely related; akin ... a brother or sister*. The word “*sibling*” (*sib + ling*) is defined as “*a brother or sister*”; “*A sibling may be (a) each or any one of two or more individuals born to the same parents...including twins, triplets, and the like; (b) each or any one of two or more individuals having one parent in common; and (c) any brother or sister adopted into the family*”. “*An only child has no siblings*” - i.e. is **not** a sibling. In the last-mentioned definition, the relationship between siblings is not only acknowledged, but also suggests that a brother or sister extends the sense of self and changes the status of the child to that of “sibling.”

Today it is generally accepted that the world of the child changes radically with the advent of a brother or sister but this realisation, and that of the impact of the death of a sibling, have not always been recognised as significant life events. Davies (1999) advances the hypothesis that this stems in part from historical facts. Prevailing attitudes in the Western world during and prior to the 16th century considered the child as “nothing more than a lower animal” (1999:18-19). High infant and child mortality rate at that time is another consideration. It is not within the scope of this thesis to explore the history of childhood (for some interesting information in this area, see Philippe Ariès, 1962). Suffice it to say that attitudes in the Western world towards children have changed dramatically over the past years and the above definitions seem to reflect the historical development of greater interest in children, and of siblings.

Although it is also outside the scope of this study to make cross-cultural comparisons, it is apparent that various cultural groups differ in the way the term *sibling* is used and in respect of who is identified as a sibling. Within some African cultures, for example, “my brother” or “my sister” is applied very broadly and not limited only to biological and adoptive siblings. The term can refer to any other member of the same tribe or group.

Western societies are more generally inclined to identify siblings by genealogical or biological criteria in the case of full siblings and half siblings, and by legal criteria, in the case of step- or adoptive siblings (Cicirelli, 1995: 71). Biological and legal definitions include full siblings, half-siblings and adoptive siblings. Given the increasing prevalence of blended families, Cicirelli (1995) also mentions stepsiblings - i.e. where the individuals have no biological parents *in common* - and “fictive siblings” - i.e. non-family members who have been accepted into the family as siblings based on “desirability or custom rather than on the basis of blood ties or legal criteria” (1995: 3) and where “affectional or behavioural” criteria would apply (1995: 71). Foster children who may live as fully integrated members of a family for a few years could arguably be included in this latter group.

The broader application of the concept of siblingship presents a challenge to researchers of sibling bereavement who seek to understand this loss experience as distinct from bereavement following the loss of other significant others (Robinson & Mahon, 1997). From a phenomenological perspective it is the *meaning* that counts. Cross-culturally and within a culture or within a sub-culture or within a family, it is the *meaning* predicated to another that makes one a “sibling.” For the purposes of this study, the participants themselves decided who counted as a “sibling”. In point of fact, only full siblings volunteered to participate, and were included in the study.

3.1 The place of the sibling bond in psychology

Sigmund Freud started the psychiatric-psychological investigation of the phenomenon of grief. His notion of “besetzung”, of course, is pivotal to any understanding of loss, grief and sorrow. But has he, or have his followers, dissidents or revisionists, shed light on sibling loss? Or has the psychoanalytic emphasis on the nuclear family essentially minimised sibling bonds and contributed to the way in which the grief of siblings has been marginalised?

3.1.1 Sigmund Freud

Existentially, Freud was stuck in the patriarchy and he accentuated parental authority as befitted the historical and cultural situation of his time. His most astonishing discovery concerned the core of neurosis, the Oedipus complex. Few scholars fail to note that Sigmund was a first-born and his mother's favourite. Some writers argue that this may partly explain why Freud focused his attention on the special and intimate relationship of the child to his parents. Most critics, however, realise that

Freud's own attachment gave him a special sensitivity to his patients' Oedipal predicament, and helped him to explain various psychological phenomena that until then had been explained reductively as flaws in the brain or in the central nervous system.

Pertinent to the theme of this study, Freud did not highlight the sibling relationship in his theory of personality development (Brunori, 1998). However, in a very thorough article on the psychoanalytic literature on siblings, Colonna and Newman (1983: 289) document that Freud did indeed bring to the surface the importance of siblings, even describing specific developmental advantages in the sibling relationship. Some of these developmental advantages include: intellectual stimulation provided by siblings, impact of siblings on later object choice, and the effect of a sibling on a girl's maternal instincts. What does this ambiguity mean?

Ernest Jones (1953/1956: 4) points out that when Freud was 11 months old, a brother, Julius was born and died 8 months later (i.e. when Freud was 19 months old). Although Freud makes little mention of the loss in his writings, he does accentuate the powerful emotions associated with such losses, the tremendous conflict and guilt resulting from rivalry towards the newcomer. In terms of the multiple conflicts and relational breaks with male friends, both older (Breuer) and younger (Jung, Rank, Firenczi), it is safe to say that the loss issue, with all its unconscious and ambivalent features, haunted him throughout his life. As we will see below, he left it to Adler to emphasise the drama of siblings within the family.

Concerning the full reality of sibling bonds, what is significant is that few papers appear with *sibling* in the title, and that in contrast to other important topics, there has never been a panel or symposium on siblings. Fifteen years after Colonna and Newman's publication (1983), a Workshop on Sib-Links was held by the Group-Analytic Society. Surprisingly, even then Wooster (1998: 331) notes that, "in scanning the relatively small amount of literature on sibling dynamics much of it seems to be confined to the last 10 or 15 years."

With his discovery of a *dynamic* unconscious, Freud became preoccupied with the Oedipal triangle. He probed the dramatic issues that take place within that constellation, the various and sundry emotions that the erotic-aggressive *trieb* spurs: love and hate, jealousy and envy, possessiveness and resentments. Within the "games of triangles", sibling interactions were dominated by that geometrical figure (mother-child-father) and by the play of forces that occurs with its various constellations of lines and angles. Sibling interaction was relegated to issues of rivalry for the mother's attention and affection or for the father's power and respect.

Freud's (1954) contribution to this century's understanding of the significance of early childhood experiences for subsequent development and the observations, in his work on dreams, of the intensity of conflicting emotions in the child's inner world (not only in relation to parents but also in relation to siblings): namely that "intense hostile feelings between siblings are far more frequent in childhood than the unseeing eye of the adult observer can perceive" (1954: 252), opened the door to the exploration of the meaning of the sibling relationship. In referring to the relation of children to their brothers and sisters, Freud not only introduced the theme of sibling rivalry and Oedipal jealousy but also the concept of ambivalence in the sibling relationship: "I do not know why we presuppose that *that* relation must be a loving one" (1954: 250).

Unfortunately, Freud did not expand his insights into the sibling relationship and in the psychoanalytic literature following Freud, siblings were perceived mainly as rivals, as objects which frustrate the child's egoistic needs for union with the mother and who generate anxieties about being replaced by a younger brother or sister (Colonna and Newman, 1983: 286). Followers and dissidents of Freud did little to highlight the power and mystery of the sibling bond.

3.1.2 Carl Gustav Jung

Jung's anthropological and spiritual psychology, so far removed from Freud's preoccupation with Oedipus, never specifically addresses the sibling relationship. He merely alludes to it while detailing the archetypes of the collective unconscious. The "Sister"/"Brother" archetype is subsumed under either the "anima"- "animus" or the "shadow" insofar as the sister/brother frequently functions as one's "alter ego": balance; the other side; one's "shadow".

3.1.3 Alfred Adler

Adler (1927/1998) deviated from Freud by stressing the social factors in development and in the origin of the neuroses. His emphasis on inferiority is part of his picture of the individual confronting the social situation. It is within this context that Adler is the only major follower of Freud to discuss sibling influences at any length. Each child is born and raised within a family with a specific perspective contingent upon his or her position in relation to other siblings. In this sense, Adler (1932/1980: 144-155) provided a nuanced view of the stylistic differences of the child according to birth order.

His emphasis on the importance of the social dimension led to a break from Freud's intimate circle. Adler postulated specifically that power was more basic than sexuality to familial, gender and inter-gender relationships. As the second of six children (Orgler, 1939), Adler acknowledged the importance of siblings but focused more on the effects of the drive for status and power and the importance of compensating for feelings of inferiority. Thus, competitive strivings, interpersonal

struggles and compensatory processes dominate his “Individual Psychology”. Sibling rivalry is one manifestation of the power struggles, the aggressive feelings that pivot around the inferiority-superiority dimension.

3.1.4 Object Relations and Attachment Theorists

“Object relations” and “attachment” theorists revised Freud by placing a premium on the pre-Oedipal, early mother-child relationship. Possibly this emphasis has contributed to the perception that the horizontal or “lateral” sibling relationships are secondary and relatively unimportant when compared to the “vertical” parent-child relationship (Brown, 1998). In the same vein, there is the expectation that siblings would be less affected in a *direct* way by the loss of a brother or sister.

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Bowlby (1980) concedes that siblings may function as substitute/surrogate attachment figures and caregivers, especially when the mother-infant bond is characterised as deficient in “holding” and “handling” or where there has been “failed dependency”. Following Freud, Bowlby (1979) also notes that ambivalence, the jostling of feelings of anger and hate with concern and love towards their siblings, and the conflict and guilt which arises within the child when these feelings are directed toward the same person, is the rule rather than the exception (Bowlby, 1979: 5).

In general though, object-relations theorists also missed the powerful impact that siblings have on each other's lives. The implication remained that the sibling relationship is a secondary and less significant one.

3.1.5 The Cultural Revisionists

The cultural revisionists of Freud (Karen Horney; Erik Erikson; Erik Fromm; Heinz Hartmann; Ernest Kris; R. M. Loewenstein) excise the *todestrieb*, the death-drive. They try to inject a healthy optimism into Freud's alleged lapse toward pessimism. Still this group did not resurrect the sibling bond and neglected its originality as a genuine relationship in its own right.

3.1.6 Erik H. Erikson

Erik Erikson's (1982/1994: 32-33) psycho-sexual/social developmental theory is rich with “radii of significant relations” throughout the life cycle, influencing all phases of an individual's development. He too views the sibling bond as deriving solely from the relationship to parents. Erikson underscores a major insight of both Freud and phenomenology, namely that time is personal, existential and lived, not linear, static or of successive duration. Thus he provides some perspective on the ways that sibling relationships change during various phases over an entire life span. For example, siblings assist or impede each other as they go through adolescence, play a mediating role in the family, help each other to better understand their parents, help one another to break away from home, influence marital

choices, share in the care of aged parents, and co-negotiate the funeral when parents die. However, Erickson does not make thematic the sibling bond, *qua* bond.

3.1.7 Harry Stack Sullivan

Sullivan's (1953) interpersonal relations theory, perhaps more than any other psychological theory, deconstructs the exclusivity, the “monolithic influence”, of the family as the main or only structure of developmental significance in the child's life. Although he too fails to elaborate on the sibling relationship, Sullivan does note that even in the early phases of an infant's life other caregivers (apart from the mother) may be intimately involved with the child and influence his/her development positively or negatively. A nurse, a grandparent or “older sister” may become as significant a person in the child's life, as primary a caregiver, as the mother/father (Sullivan, 1953: 115). Later, peers provide the opportunity for significant favourable change in a young person's sense of self that can be distorted by relationships within the family. This opportunity begins powerfully in the “juvenile era”, the “actual time for becoming social” (Sullivan, 1953: 227). Sullivan focuses on the “chum” relationship (1953: 245) during preadolescence as one of distinctive emotional power capable of modifying many of the “warps” in a child's personality development which arise from unsatisfactory parent-child relationships and the fixed roles which he or she is allocated within the primary family group. Especially because Sullivan's own life-experience made him well aware that the coming of a friend is a gift, an epiphany, a miracle, he urges everyone to be open to developing a “chum” relationship as early as possible. It helps one to overcome some of the “fantastic” ideas about the self that come from being the favourite in the family, the firstborn, the only boy/girl, etc. However, it is also the first “we”- relationship, and the first budding of love. With this exhortation in mind, and insofar as sibling relationships are considered to be relatively egalitarian and a brother or sister can also be a good “friend”, it may be argued that the sibling very often serves to accelerate the separation from mother and helps to overcome the illusion of symbiotic oneness with mother.

In the sense described above, it is perhaps safe to say that the earliest “chum” relationship occurs within the relationship between brothers and sisters. However, whereas friends can be conceptualised as “characters from different novels” (Blackwell, 1994: 44) coming together and creating their own story, siblings are essentially characters from the same “novel” thrown together, stuck with each other and sharing a common concern - their parents. The sibling bond, in these respects, is therefore far more complex and multi-layered than a best friend relationship, which can be discontinued once it ceases to be a mutually satisfying one. Reflecting on the above statement, one is confronted with the existential reality that while a brother or a sister can be disowned, the bond itself cannot be cancelled. It exists for life. How then is it possible that our social sciences have so thoroughly overlooked this bond for so long?

3.1.8 Family Systems Theorists

Turning to the family therapy literature (Barker, 1991; Haley, 1963; Minuchin, 1974, 1984) with its over-arching concern with the family group, there is an expectation that family therapy thinking would be sensitive to the power and inherent value of the sibling bond. In part, it is. However, mostly we find that in family systems theory (particularly that influenced by general systems theories), the sibling relationship is conceptualised as a “subsystem” or “subgroup.” The individual members are objectified as components in a system, rather than as individuals involved in a genuine relationship with a real other person. By reducing the relationship to a subsystem, the relationship *qua* relationship as well as the individual is lost.

If the lives of siblings are so little acknowledged and so little understood then their deaths too cannot be considered significant for the surviving sibling. More recently researchers have focused more specifically on the relationship between siblings, providing some important insights into this unique relationship.

3.2 Unraveling the Sibling Bond

Echoes of each other's being.
Whose eyes are those that look like mine?
Whose smile reminds me of my own?
Whose thoughts come through with just a glance?
Who knows me like no others do?
Who in the whole world is most like me
Yet not like me at all?
My sibling.

From *What makes us siblings*, Faber & Mazlish, 1989 (in Davies, 1999:1)

While the sibling bond has attributes in common with other significant relationships, the above quote reveals the mysterious sense of self-in-the-other that comes from being a brother or sister, while simultaneously highlighting the awareness that the other is still “other”. Siblings may share the same parents, look alike, speak the same language, have the same voice inflection and intuitively understand each other and know each other’s core self but they are also uniquely themselves. A number of writers (Cicirelli, 1982, 1995; Rosen, 1986; Maratos, 1998; Davies, 1999) are in agreement that sibling bonds have certain unique and distinctive characteristics which distinguish them from other relationships and give the sibling bond a different texture to the bonds which bind individuals in other relationships. The memories and feelings that accompany the thoughts of one’s brother or sister in childhood are not based on the sibling status alone; they derive from the direct, interpersonal

relationship between siblings (Davies, 1999). Some unique characteristics of the sibling relationship have been identified and will be briefly discussed.

3.2.1 Sibling Relationships are Long-lasting

Sibling relationships often last a lifetime. The relationship begins with the birth of the second child (even before the birth if the firstborn is prepared for the coming of a brother or sister) and usually endures throughout the life span. Cicirelli (1982) notes that the relationship with a sibling will probably be the longest lasting that a person will experience and is unique by virtue of its very duration and shared memories over the life span. Pape (1999) proposes that it is not longevity alone that distinguishes sibling relationships from other relationships but the fact that they must “constantly adjust to the ever-changing and developing nature of humans, across developmental stages, crises, initiations, successes and changes” (1999:1). While this may be true of other close and long-standing relationships, developmental changes within the first two decades of life, the period when siblings typically have the most intimate contact with each other, are probably the most dramatic. The connections that siblings forge are “deeply entrenched and embedded” (Pape, 1999). The important role that siblings play in providing a sense of “rootedness” and a sense of continuity cannot be underestimated. While siblings may be separated under certain circumstances, there can be no dissolution of the sibling *status* and there are instances where siblings who have been separated either through emigration or disruption of the family system still long to be reunited with each other. Cicirelli (1982: 268) expresses this as follows:

“The nature of the sib relationship is such that intimacy is immediately restored even after long absences. Siblings often go to great lengths to locate a brother or sister who has been separated by adoption or other circumstances, and when reunited, a uniquely close relationship develops almost immediately, even when none existed before.”

3.2.2 Sibling Relationships are Ascribed rather than Earned

Closely related to the long-lasting nature of the sibling relationship is the absence of choice. Not chosen means that the relationship is non-conscious and without freedom, i.e. it is not consciously and freely entered into, nor can it be annulled or cancelled: “There are no rituals of church or synagogue that celebrate sibling bonds, nor legal means to break them” (Bank & Kahn, 1982: 5). A sibship is forever. One can choose not to be friends or to divorce but one cannot choose to be or not to be a sibling. The relationship is “given” and sibling status is obtained by birth, or by legal action in the case of step-siblings and adoptive siblings. It is significant in this respect that according to South African law an individual has a right to maintenance from his or her siblings should the parents not be able to support him or her (i.e. where there is a need in respect of one sibling, and an ability to provide in respect of the other sibling. This applies to all blood relatives).

These dimensions of the sibling bond, i.e. the duration of the relationship and the fact that it is *not chosen*, may be a source of comfort/security and/or distress. Unlike other relationships that one approaches directly and consciously forms, and which can be dissolved if the relationship is no longer mutually satisfying (or, as in some instances, no longer "useful"), sibling relationships, whether positive or negative, cannot be terminated or totally ignored.

3.2.3 Sibling Relationships are Egalitarian

Sibling relationships are more or less egalitarian and have been referred to as "horizontal" or "lateral" relationships to distinguish them from the "vertical" parent-child relationships. Even though power and status differences may exist between siblings due to a number of factors, including their position in the family, age, size, gender, influence on parents, and the fact that elder siblings may assume the role of protector, substitute caretaker or mentor, siblings generally relate to each other as equals. Minuchin (1984: 59) describes the sibling "subsystem" as a "social laboratory" where children explore peer relationships. Of significance in this regard is that in comparison to the parent-child relationship, siblings expect to be treated as equals by their brothers or sisters. An example would be the younger sibling who refuses to take orders from a much older sibling: "You can't tell me what to do. You are not my mother/father!"

3.2.4 The Subtle Dialectic of Sameness and Difference

Siblings have a shared world and a common language and culture that is given through the history of shared environments and shared lived experiences within the same family (unlike relationships with friends who have to *create* a common ground and a shared language). The storehouse of memories contributes to their similarities and to an understanding between them which others may find difficult to grasp (Cicirelli, 1995: 2). However, siblings also have many non-shared experiences and non-shared environments and these contribute to the differences between them (Cicirelli, 1995; Davies, 1999). Apart from having different friends and different experiences with other adult authorities, siblings receive differential treatment from the parents (e.g. first born as opposed to second born, only son or only daughter, favourite child, terminally ill child). It is also apparent that parents are not the "same" parents as they move through their own transitional phases and life experiences. Indeed, no sibling ever has the "same" parent. The very act of bringing the second into existence changes everything. In addition, siblings themselves perceive and experience their parents differently and take up certain experiences in very different ways. As pointed out by Cicirelli (1982: 268), "the nature of the sibling relationship varies with the particular individuals involved and can range from extreme closeness to extreme rivalry and hostility and, in some cases, total apathy."

Sibling bonds also change over time so that a close relationship may become more distant, and a rivalrous one may become extremely close. Thus, the feelings towards one's siblings are not based on

the sibling *status* alone but derive also from the *direct* relationship and interaction between siblings themselves. Consequently, when a brother or sister dies, surviving siblings (and parents) each respond in their own unique ways to the loss.

3.2.5 Sibling Relationships are Deeply Embedded in the Family

The link with family is another characteristic that distinguishes the sibling relationship from other significant relationships. The sibling relationship is unique because the individuals share one or both parents, a common cultural milieu (language, heritage, traditions), and common early experiences within the family, all of which bind them in very complex and unique ways. Even in adulthood, siblings usually maintain contact, attend family gatherings and jointly help with the care of aged parents (Cicirelli, 1982).

Another but related feature of the sibling relationship is played out by siblings after the death of parents (at the wake or funeral, at the reading of the will and the settling of the estate), when feelings of dis-ease and alienation occur; when siblings break away from, or draw closer to each other. This dimension of the sibling bond is mentioned by Maratos (1998: 342):

“... siblings are part of the family ‘business’. Alongside the emotional dimension of the relationships is the business side. ... Two prominent features of the family business are (a) who does the work, what work and when, and (b) who inherits the wealth.”

This raises the question: why do brothers and sisters become so intense at such events? In terms of psychoanalytic theory, this could be understood as a reactivation of early sibling rivalries and the need to be affirmed as the first, the best, the most loved and the most important to parents. It may well be sibling rivalry, but it seems to be more than this. Death is life's ultimate imperative. When it sounds, who can be sure of the echoes? Alapack (2004: 6) succinctly describes the existential chaos that reigns at these events:

“Weddings and funerals bring out the best and the worst in families. Some people desire the impossible: water from the moon. In this boundary situation, those who insisted on being placed first were disgruntled. I marvelled at the way Death slices and dices, showing us who will hang together and who will be pulled asunder... Death who puts all of us in second place, absolutely.”

At the death of a parent, grief either reigns or is conspicuously “present” by its absence. The “gears” of family functioning in the moment are not perfectly meshed. Mourning creates an existential mess. Thus it triggers extremes. It heals or it destroys.

3.3 The Dimensions of Sibling Bonds

OLDER SISTERS....are liable to nag. To refuse
 to lend you things. To scold. To make you walk too fast.
 But, on the other hand, they take on bully
 boys at school and send them running for
 their lives.
 They disentangle problems in arithmetic
 and knitting. And when they're grown they listen
 to your secrets and anxieties. And never
 tell - without your say-so.
 An older sister is a friend and a defender -
 a listener, conspirator, a counsellor and a
 sharer of delights.
 And sorrows too.

(Pam Brown, in Exley, 1995).

Siblings can be teachers, friends, comforters, teasers, defenders, mentors, therapists and competitors. Many of us will have experienced most of the following emotions at one time or another, and some of these emotions at the same time, in our sibling relationships: the awe/horror at seeing the new brother or sister for the first time; the jealousy/pride when he is admired by others; the enjoyment of holding this little being for a few moments and the resentment at having to take care of her; the intense anger when she breaks your special toy and the hurt/sadness when she refuses to play with you; the irritation when he follows you and your friends around, "shadows" you, imitates you, and the comfort of having him around on your first day at school; the relief or embarrassment when she protects you from the school bully; the joy and pride when he gets into first team cricket; the shared tears when she has her first love disappointment; the huddling together when parents argue or fight; the sadness and loss when he goes away to college. As stated by Bank and Kahn (1982: 296):

"As lived by each individual who is a brother or sister, the sibling experience dictates some of the grandest and some of the meanest of human emotions. The whole range of human feelings enters into this relationship, whose complexity defies anyone to dictate how and what it ought to be."

The complex and multi-dimensional nature of the relational world of brothers and sisters and the various dimensions of this bond, have been the focus of much developmental research over the past three decades (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Cicirelli, 1982, 1995; Dunn & Kendrik, 1982; Dunn, 1985; Schachter, 1982; Schachter & Stone, 1987; Sutton-Smith & Rosenberg, 1970). This focus highlights the significance of the sibling and the sibling group in terms of the child's social, emotional and moral development.

A review of the literature reveals several interwoven themes that characterise the sibling bond.

3.3.1 Socialisation

In their interaction with each other siblings learn to develop their sense of difference, to respect the rights of others, and to develop ways of resolving interpersonal conflicts (Moss & Moss, 1986). It is within the sibling relationship that children learn to share and to show mutual concern, to comfort and to annoy. Because they are stuck with each other, they learn how to negotiate, co-operate and compete. They also learn how to make friends and allies, how to save face while accommodating others, and how to achieve recognition of their skills (Minuchin, 1984: 59).

As noted by Moss and Moss (1986: 405) a younger sibling may experience the older one as a guide or mentor in approaching social situations and may be reassured by the success of the elder sibling that a task can be accomplished. Correlatively the elder sibling may gain a sense of personal competence in having mastered a specific life experience that now is a formidable task for the younger sibling. Socialisation continues into adulthood as siblings share experiences as they meet developmental milestones and in most cases continue to be significant role models for each other (1986: 405).

3.3.2 Familiar Presence and Constancy

A sibling offers a sense of familiar presence from earliest childhood (Bank & Kahn, 1982: 16) and brothers and sisters derive a sense of constancy that is particularly meaningful during times of stress and change (e.g. marital conflicts, divorce, separation from parents). In early childhood the sibling relationship is one of intimate daily contact as siblings interact within the home and at pre-school - they may share a bedroom, bath together, attend the same nursery school, play with the same friends and, most importantly, deal with the same parents. These shared experiences, which do not automatically imply an emotional closeness, nevertheless provide a sense of constancy and familiarity that facilitates the transition from absolute dependency to a degree of autonomy.

Winnicott (1953) uses the term “transitional object” to refer to inanimate objects that provide comfort and security to the young child during the stage of separation and individuation or in the face of a strange and unfamiliar, sometimes frightening, outside world. To a certain extent, siblings provide the constancy and security which enables the child to make the transition from mother and to face the outside world. Davies (1999: 7) refers to two studies (Stewart, 1983; Samuels, 1980) which demonstrate how the presence of elder siblings enabled younger siblings to explore an unfamiliar environment and how, from a protected position with an elder sibling, young children were also gradually able to engage a stranger in interaction. Although it is more frequently an elder sibling who supports and assists a younger one, a confident and outgoing younger sibling may also help an older brother or sister and facilitate greater exploration of his or her world.

3.3.3 Companionship

Particularly at the pre-school level when siblings spend a great deal of time together, a sibling may be the only playmate that a child has. The importance of peer relationships in the development of children's capacity for concern for another person and empathy has been well documented by Sullivan (1953). However, we do not live with our friends; we live with our siblings. By virtue of the intimate daily contact between siblings, the sharing of a history within the family as well as having many shared experiences and activities, the capacity for concern and mutual identification is enhanced. Within this context siblings come to know each other intimately, often developing a private language and an understanding of each other which may be difficult even for parents to understand. While sibling companionship may be strongest in childhood and sometimes also in adolescence and young adulthood, weakened during the years of establishing other intimate relationships and their own nuclear family, this dimension of the sibling relationship may be re-activated in later adulthood when the "empty nest, widowhood and joint parent care" become significant issues (Moss & Moss, 1986: 405).

3.3.4 Supportive and Solacing Power of Siblings

Siblings can have great solacing power and can provide support and containment (Winnicott's "holding environment") in the sense that they do not feel alone and their shared experiences enable them to cope better with stressful situations, e.g. loss, and the trauma of a fragmented family life through separation or divorce. Although siblings are not the most stable caregivers because of their own needs and immaturity, Bowlby (1973) has also shown that children separated temporarily from their mothers or other adult caregivers, are inclined to fare better provided the sibling relationship is also not disrupted. The solacing power of siblings is perhaps most powerfully demonstrated when siblings are placed in a Children's Home due to parental failure to care for their offspring (Rodrigues, 1998). In such circumstances, siblings frequently become the main attachment figures for each other and the only link to parents, and exert a formative influence on personality development and identity. It is significant that, in this respect, the courts are sensitive to children's needs for continuity and recognise the importance of the sibling relationship. Except in extreme or unusual circumstances, the separation of siblings from each other is discouraged in the event of a divorce or placement in foster care or in a Children's Home. Bank and Kahn (1982) aver that these sibling's relationships and identities may be intertwined, sometimes for life, because they have jointly faced traumatic psychological losses at crucial stages of their development.

However, while a sibling is more likely to assume the caring role when primary relationships cannot be relied on, there is ample evidence (Dunn, 1985) to suggest that this also occurs simply because of who the siblings happen to be and even very young children will attempt to console and protect their siblings without any adult prompting to do so. By studying young children in direct interaction with

their brothers and sisters, Dunn (1985: 23-24) was able to demonstrate that even within the first two years young children are able to display an understanding of their sibling's feelings. The siblings in her study showed the beginnings of empathy by displaying concern at their sibling's distress - fetched their comfort objects, stroked their siblings, or called for mother's help. As they grow older, some siblings can be so close that they can almost complete each other's sentences or "know" how the other is feeling without speaking at all. Indeed, it can be argued that siblings provide the most reliable and consistently supportive relationship and it is not unusual for siblings to remain sources of emotional support throughout the life span.

3.3.5 Loyalty

There are many siblings who are good friends as well as being siblings and this paves the way for satisfactory relationships with peers outside the family. Within these sibling relationships, the individuals feel free to be angry, sad or happy; to be open and honest about themselves and each other. Siblings have a deep sense of trust and loyalty which goes beyond "group solidarity" (Bank & Kahn, 1982); they are aware of each other's feelings, preferences and secrets; they enjoy doing things together or not doing anything at all; they affirm and validate each other and "are there for each other", offering emotional support. Moss and Moss (1986: 401) cite Bossard (1948) in this regard, namely that "life among siblings is like living in the nude, psychologically speaking."

A friendship between siblings is distinctive in its emotional power and it is not unusual for an individual in our Western culture to regard a particular person who is not biologically related but with whom he or she identifies or shares a close emotional tie as "like the brother/sister that I never had" in order to denote a special kind of relationship; one that is closer than most other relationships. The mingling of blood by two friends to symbolize the closeness and enduring nature of their relationship is another example denoting the special nature of a sibling relationship. The "blood knot" can be tied or loosened but it cannot be severed - blood *is* thicker than water - even if siblings do not get on well with each other, they cannot turn away from each other. For example, in the film, "Marvin's room", two sisters estranged for 20 years are reunited when the elder sister, Bessie, is diagnosed with leukemia and her survival depends on finding a relative whose bone marrow matches her own. Although they have not always got on well together and they must acknowledge the past in order to confront the realities of the present, the younger sister, Lee, does not hesitate to come to her sister's aid.

Of course not all siblings become or remain friends and some sibling relationships can be uneasy, laden with conflict, apathetic or even violent and disturbed. The latter could include physical and/or emotional abuse, and incestuous relationships; interactions where the sibling becomes the enemy. While these dimensions of the sibling relationship have been noted by clinicians and by Freud

(1918/1948) himself, e.g. *The Wolf-Man and his Sister*, scope constraints do not allow for a lengthy discussion here. Suffice it to say that while sibling relationships are by nature ambivalent, the conflict and guilt arising from the above situations could complicate the mourning process in the event of the death of a sibling.

3.3.6 Rivalry

Ever since Freud's discovery of sibling rivalry and ambivalence in sibling relationships, we have come to realize that the sibling bond is not simply "a loving one" (1954: 250). Indeed, Winnicott (1964) found sibling rivalry to be so pervasive that he regarded it as "normal". Aggression and its tributaries: rivalry, competition, jealousy and envy, are perhaps the dimensions of the sibling relationship that have been most extensively explored in the psychoanalytical and developmental literature and research.

The term "rival" as pointed out by Bank and Kahn (1982: 197) is derived from the Latin word "*rivalis*" meaning "having rights to the same stream". It is also defined as "one who uses the same stream" and "compete" (World Book Dictionary, 1988). Within the family context, a child can be a rival of another child for the love and attention of a parent, for a favoured position or special role in the family, or for another sibling's interest and affirmation (Bank & Kahn, 1982). Typically rivalry and jealousy involve three people, but many forms of sibling aggression are not rivalrous and may become part of a "creative and interesting dialectic that strengthens the relationship" between siblings (Bank & Kahn, 1982: 198) and defines more clearly who they are.

That conflict between siblings is *normal* and can indeed contribute to the important process of self-definition is a central theme in Schachter and Stone's (1987) paper. However, the authors also stress that parental intervention in the normal processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation between siblings can lead to a pattern that they term "pathological de-identification" in which one sibling is assigned the identity of "angel-victim", and the other is seen as the "devil-aggressor" who is always harassing the "angel", and parents constantly intervene to protect the "angel". When a loss occurs, these family "myths" are likely to persist and may leave the surviving sibling feeling undervalued.

3.3.7 Identification

Each of the above dimensions of the sibling bond plays a significant role in a child's identity development. Bank and Kahn (1982) describe eight identification processes, on the continuum of sameness to difference, that characterise the sibling bond. For convenience the authors combine these into three main groups and note that some are transitory while others can endure for a lifetime (Bank & Kahn, 1982: 84-111):

- *Close identification*, in which each person feels great similarity with and little difference from a sibling. The relationship is fused, blurred or characterised by hero worship/idealisation. The distinctive feature of close identification is a “lack of self.”
- *Partial identification*, in which each person feels some similarity and some difference with a sibling. This is characterised by loyal acceptance and the relationship is a mutually dependent one.
- *Distant identification*, in which each person feels great difference and little similarity with a sibling. Rigid differentiation of self and a tendency to disown any need of, or attachment to the sibling is the distinctive feature of this form of identification and this usually leads to the “estrangement” of siblings.

Bank and Kahn (1982) posit that both close and distant identification tend to create rigid relationships where one or both siblings have a vested interest in keeping the relationship “in place” and change is resisted. Partial identification, on the other hand, is more flexible with siblings having emotional access to others without an insistence that their sibling relationship “comes before all else” (1982: 84). In dealing with the loss of a sibling, Bank and Kahn (1982) note that an important force in sibling grief is the type of previous identification between the siblings: “how did the survivor feel about a dead brother or sister in life?” (1982: 271-272). Put slightly differently, “what meanings did the deceased brother or sister have for the surviving sibling?” This is essentially what this study aims to explore and explicate.

3.4 Concluding comments.

It is clear from the foregoing that the sibling bond is an extremely complex and multi-faceted one, with siblings establishing an intimate, warm, sometimes polarized, sometimes fused, and sometimes rivalrous relationship. Although they fluctuate, these dimensions of the sibling relationship persist into adult life.

The above characteristics and dimensions of the sibling relationship indicate the significance of the sibling bond over the life span. The shared life-world contributes to a sense of continuity and history through the link with one’s family and roots. The temporal continuity of the lives of siblings is linked to a history, to parents and even to the destiny of a people (as for example, survivors of the Holocaust) and extends far into the future: through their children, even beyond the temporal limits of their physical existence.

But blood alone does not account for the relationship between brothers and sisters. Sibling bonds emanate equally from the sibling's being or existence. Thus, apart from the link with parents, it is also on the ontological plane that siblings display concern, loyalty and caring. The “horizontal” or “lateral” relationship between siblings is unlike any other relational bond. The sibling relationship is free of the sexual and legal bonds that bind husband and wife or lovers (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Cicirelli, 1995) and yet the bonds that brothers and sisters have are stronger than any law.

Despite the significance of the sibling attachment, for many years psychology has not studied siblings directly. It is only fairly recently that it has been recognized that siblings within a family group have a unique relationship of their own independent of the parent-child relationship: that they have special social relationships, and that children may have valuable relationships with siblings in addition to their relationships with parents (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Cicirelli, 1982, 1995; Dunn, 1985). To a certain extent, literature has functioned by proxy to compensate for the gap in the psychological literature. Novels and popular films, such as “Little Women”, “The Colour Purple”, “Marvin's Room”, “Rainman”, and “My Brother's Keeper”, demonstrate the caring, supportive, and restitutive power of sibling bonds and highlight the mystery of the sibling relationship.

What is it like to lose such a vibrant, fluctuating and life-long relationship with a real other person with whom the surviving sibling has been intimately involved from birth? In my clinical experience, the loss of a brother or sister is seldom acknowledged, and the lack of opportunity to go through the grief “work” (Freud) may leave the sibling struggling with the loss many years later. The following section will deal with a literature review of sibling *loss*.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW : PART TWO

SIBLING LOSS

4. Introduction and Definitions

Loss, by definition, implies separation, deprivation and change. Grief is the reaction to the loss of a significant other. Although siblings can be “lost” to one another in ways other than through death and it is clear that grief will be experienced at the time of any loss, separation or leave-taking, “there is a dimension to the death of a loved one that causes a different kind of pain and helplessness, a special finality” (Weizman & Kamm, 1985: 39). It is this finality; death and its “irrevocable permanence” (Brice, 1991: 18) that this thesis explores.

While death is defined as the “final cessation of vital functions”; “event which ends life”; “ceasing to be, annihilation”, and many researchers speak of the *death* of a sibling in order to distinguish it from loss through separation, this description (i.e. as an end event that occurs at a circumscribed time) does not speak to the broader and deeper meanings/dimensions implied by the term *loss*.

But what is loss?

Defined by The Concise Oxford Dictionary, “loss” is “*losing or being lost*”. Turning to Klein's (1971) etymological roots of the term, we discover from Middle and Old English, “*losien*” with its meaning of “to perish, lose”; and “*losian*” – “to perish, be lost”. Thus, there is the implication that in losing a significant other, there is also a loss of self. Part of the process of grieving is, therefore, to recover or get back the self. From the German, “*Du-verliezen*”, “*verlieren*” (derived from the Gothic “*fra-luisan*” with its meaning of “to lose” and “*leus*” an “s”-enlargement of the base “*leu*”-, “*lie*”-, “*lu*”-) means “to cut off, untie, separate”. Similarly, the Greek “*lu-ein*” means “to loosen; untie; slacken”. The term is paradoxically linked with losing and being lost, with separation, to cut off, untie, loosen, slacken, and contains within it the sense of the “work of mourning” as described by Freud (1917/1957). Also implied is that this “loosening”, “untying” or “slackening” is not time bound. A sense of loss is experienced not only at a time but also over time; it refers not only to the person lost but also to the ones left behind. For these reasons the term “loss” was selected for the present study.

Although there are differences in the formal definitions of *grief*, *mourning* and *bereavement*, they overlap in meaning and are frequently used interchangeably in the thanatology literature and in contemporary language. It is therefore appropriate at this point to define these terms.

Whenever we are affected by a loss, whenever a significant other dies, a reaction, emotional, physical and psychological, which we call *grief* is set in motion. “Grief” is defined as a “great sadness caused by ... loss”; “deep/ heavy or violent sorrow”; “anguish” (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1982) and attests to the depth and complexity of the felt human experience of loss that involves the individual's entire being. Grief is not always visible and may or may not be overtly expressed.

“Mourning”, on the other hand, is defined as “*expressing sorrow, especially by wearing black clothes.*” Cook and Oltjenbruns (1989/1998: 91) note that “mourning denotes the social prescription for the way in which we are expected to display our grief and often reflects the practices of our culture (e.g. wearing black or holding a wake).” Meyer (1975: 91) describes “mourning” as “giving visible expression to our grief.” The German “*trauer*”, like the Afrikaans “*treur*” (“grieve, mourn, be sad, languish, pine”) and the English “*mourning*”, can mean both the affect of grief and its outward manifestation. In fact, throughout Freud's classic essay (1917/1957), “On mourning and melancholia”, the translators-editors, use “mourning” in the latter sense.

However, in psychoanalytic thinking, following Freud's (1917/1957) formulations of “mourning” (i.e. conscious loss) as opposed to “melancholy” (where the meaning of the loss is unconscious), there is a more precise meaning, namely that the task of mourning is “to detach the survivor's memories and hopes from the dead” (Freud, 1912/1913, in Bolwby, 1980:16). While some analysts feel that the term “mourning” should be retained for this specific purpose, Bowlby (1980: 17) uses mourning to refer to “all psychological processes, conscious and unconscious that are set in motion by loss.” To denote the public expression of mourning Bowlby uses the term “mourning customs.”

“Bereave” is defined as “*to leave desolate, deprive of near relative*” (Pocket Oxford Dictionary, 1984), and “bereavement” as “the state of being that results from a significant loss” through death (Cook and Oltjenbruns, 1989/1998: 91), or as “the fact of loss through death”, Osterweis, *et al.*, 1984 (in Hogan & DeSantis, 1992: 162).

Although the experience of sibling loss does involve normal grief-bereavement dynamics, it has a unique texture of its own. Thus, an exhaustive review of the grief literature is not germane to this study. Only the key ideas and theoretical foundations will be discussed briefly, in particular those that shed light on the predicament of sibling loss.

4.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Loss, Grief and Mourning.

Many different theoretical perspectives provide understanding of the loss of a significant other and have also been used by therapists and researchers in their attempts to understand the experience of sibling loss. These perspectives have evolved over time and while some of the earlier theories indicate that there is ultimately a “letting go” of or detachment from the lost loved one (Freud, 1917/1957; Lindemann, 1944; Bowlby, 1979, 1980), newer orientations suggest that there is an ongoing attachment or tie to the deceased (Silverman, *et al.*, 1995).

A review of the literature on sibling loss reveals the influence of Freud (1917/1957), Klein, (1940/1991); Bowlby (1979, 1980), and Lindemann (1944) on subsequent research. These theories as well as the existential-phenomenological perspective will now be discussed.

4.1.1 Sigmund Freud ([1915]1917) - Psychoanalytic Theory

Freud (1917/1957: 256) was the first to deal with the loss of a significant other through death: “The ‘exciting’ causes of mourning are for the most part occasioned only by a real loss of the object, by its death.” According to Freud (1917/1957: 243), mourning occurs in the face of a significant personal loss of a loved person. Mourning or sorrow in such a situation is therefore central to who we are. Since we are wrapped up in the person with a love/significance reinforced by “a thousand links” (1917.1957: 256), the loss requires, even demands, radical mourning. How do we unbind the painful ties?

Freud continually juggles “economics” with meaning. During the “work of mourning”, ultimately the “verdict” of reality asserts that the loss is permanent; that continual pre-occupation with it is futile. On the other hand, meaning defies and struggles against accepting this reality. As Freud observed, human beings never willingly give up a relationship with a loved one. The resistance can be so intense that “a turning away from reality takes place” (1917/1957: 244) and the mourner keeps the absent person alive, clings to him or her through denial or through fantasy. However, in the end reality asserts itself and the grief work ends. Or does it?

Whatever the outcome, first a painful and gradual process of withdrawal of the attachment to the lost person takes place. “Bit by bit” memories of, and expectations linked to the lost loved one are brought up in detail, taking time, expending energy and burning with meaning (Freud, 1917/1957: 255). Only after this “work” has been accomplished can the bereaved invest once again in others, i.e. become once more “free and uninhibited” (1917/1957: 245).

As Freud saw it, the mood of mourning is painful. It is accompanied by a withdrawal from the outer world (except in so far as it may be connected with the lost person), an inability to turn one's affection

towards anyone else (who then would partly replace the lost one), and an incapacity to undertake anything that is unrelated to the loved person. The sufferer is so “absorbed” in the mourning that he has little energy left over for anything else. Freud saw this as a natural process that would pass, or was likely to diminish with time and did not require medical intervention (1917/1957: 243-244).

While mourning (normal grief) closely resembles melancholia (depression), Freud noted that there were differences. According to him, the core of the qualitative differences between them pivots around three striking issues: (1) whether we are conscious or unconscious about the *meaning* of our loss; (2) whether the loss is of the “object” or is self-centred; and (3) whether we are ambivalent about the lost “object” or can tolerate the ambiguity that both joy and pain are equal possibilities in every love-bond. With grief, the pain and other reactions are limited to the loss of an “external person”, whereas in depression there is an apparent internal (ego) loss as well. With depression the sufferer does not know *what* loss he has actually suffered. This is the case even if the person is aware of the loss that has precipitated his depression but, “only in the sense that he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him” (Freud, 1917/1957: 245). In contrast with the *conscious* loss in the case of grief, in depression the *meaning* of the loss remains unconscious, largely due to repressed ambivalence. With grief the world has become poor and empty; with the melancholic the person himself or herself becomes impoverished and feels worthless and useless. Succinctly, Freud clarified that if a loss remains fixed as a *self-centered, unconscious* and *ambivalent* soul-state, it cannot be mourned. Instead, a depressive shadow haunts the person.

In this essay, Freud first names an “upper” or “super” agency within consciousness. One part of the self (ego), he says, splits off and critically judges the self. In the split state of depression, we direct love towards the lost object, idealising and glorifying the one who is dead and gone. Simultaneously we aim the anger at the self. We split. We absorb the blame, feel worthless and experience guilt. For the most part, most of us honour the dead and protect our lost loved one from our own ambivalence.

How does the “grief work” finally get done? Freud surmises that there is a limit to how much one can punish oneself; grief work finally comes to an end for “economic” reasons: “We may perhaps suppose that this work of severance is so slow and gradual that by the time it has been finished the expenditure of energy necessary for it is also dissipated” (1917/1957: 255).

This major weakness in Freud’s essay opens him to the charge of reductionism and materialism. Yet, Freud was very aware of the mourner’s lived reality as revealed in an essay written more or less at the same time, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death” (Freud, 1915/1957), in which he describes the prevailing attitude of the bereaved adult concerning death and the dead, and contrasts this with the mourner’s reality. He also includes the loss of a sibling and that of a friend as significant losses:

“ ... The complement to th[e] cultural and conventional attitude towards death is provided by our complete collapse when death has struck down someone whom we love - a parent or a partner in marriage, *a brother or sister*, a child or a close friend. Our hopes, our desires and our pleasures lie in the grave with him, we will not be consoled, we will not fill the lost one's place.” (Freud, 1915/1957: 290). [My italics]

Later, having experienced the loss of his daughter, Sophie (26 years old), in the 1920 post-war flu epidemic and the death in June 1923 of Heinerle (four-and-a-half years old), Sophie's second child and Freud's favourite grandson (Jones, 1957: 96; Derrida, 1980/1987: 331), Freud expresses this reality even more poignantly in a letter of condolence to Binswanger (a psychoanalytic colleague) who lost his son to meningitis in 1926:

“Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually this is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish” (in Bowlby, 1979: 88).

It is evident from the above personal correspondence that Freud, the man, had endured love and loss. He understood that some lost loved ones are irreplaceable; that even the most ideal resolution can never be a complete relinquishment. Two nerves quicken his writing: *energy* and *meaning*. A faithful reading of Freud demands that with him we sustain the tension between the two.

Within the entire corpus of grief studies, we find two orientations based upon splitting and following only one line of his thought. Freud ended his classic 1917 paper, which he never revised, with the assertion that “energy” eventually runs out, as if the ties to the lost loved one are finally relinquished by some naturalistic process. This energy model influenced researchers and therapists to focus upon the ultimate “letting go” of, or detachment from the lost loved one (Lindemann, 1944; Klein, 1940; Bowlby, 1979, 1980). Newer orientations, however, suggest that there is an ongoing attachment or tie to the deceased (Silverman, *et al.*, 1995). Object relations revisionists and self psychologists unfold the collision of “cathexis” with the relational concepts implied in identification, the Oedipal and transference/counter-transference concepts. These last-mentioned theories come closer to the existential-phenomenological perspective that helps to elucidate a loss in the family. It must be said that the full value of Freud's contribution to the grief literature requires a reading of *all* his works, including all of his own revisions and his revision of the death-drive (*todestrieb*).

4.1.2 Melanie Klein (1940) - Object Relations Theory

Klein did extensive psychoanalytic treatment with children. Based on this work, she formulated a theory of loss that links mourning at any age with the normal infantile manic-depressive developmental position. This psychological disposition reaches a climax at the time of weaning. Klein alleges that the infant's depressive anxiety, a mixture of fear and guilt, instills a sense of responsibility

in the child for having driven away the “good mother” through the child’s own anger, greediness, envy, etc. Thus, the infant mourns the loss of love, goodness and security that the maternal object stands for (1940: 148). The mother’s physical presence and the child’s attachment to her no longer mediate the anxiety and the child experiences the loss of the mother as a personal punishment; as being punished for his or her “badness.”

In the face of the “depressive” position, the ego develops defences that are directed against “pining” for the loved object. These defences are fundamental to the whole ego organisation. Depressive anxieties of self-other destruction push the self (ego) to build up omnipotent fantasies, i.e. manic defences. Significantly, Klein's theory of the depressive position includes siblings who constitute a threat to the oneness with mother. The circle of loved objects that are attacked in fantasy and whose loss is therefore feared, widens because of the child's ambivalent relations with siblings (1940:148).

How does Klein connect the infantile depressive position with normal mourning?

It is important to note that “position” is a non-linear concept. It implies that a meaning or pattern begins and does not end. The names change, the faces change, the places change, but nothing changes. Thus, any loss in later life reactivates the depressive position (i.e. the early mourning). However, while the normal “depressive position” usually occurs in the presence of the mother, in the case of separation through death, the depressive position arises in the *absence* of the significant other. In Klein's view, the poignancy of the actual loss of a loved person is greatly increased by the mourner’s unconscious fantasies of having lost his *internal* “good” objects as well. He then feels that his internal “bad” objects predominate and that his inner world is in danger of disruption (1940: 156).

Klein extends Freud’s view that loss generates an impulse in the mourner to reinstate the lost loved one in the self. She posits that the mourner not only needs to reincorporate the person whom he has just lost, but also reinstates his internalised good objects (ultimately his loved parents), who became part of his inner world from the earliest stages of development. These are also felt to be destroyed whenever loss is experienced and the early depressive position, with its anxieties, guilt, and feelings of grief are reactivated. According to Klein, any significant loss threatens the inner world and revives earlier feelings of persecution. The combination of mourning while feeling persecuted aggravates ambivalence, impedes trust and therefore inhibits friendly relations with people who might lend support at this difficult time. The pain experienced in the slow process of testing reality in the work of mourning thus seems to be partly due to the multiple tasks of renewing the links to the external world, reinstating the actual lost loved object and restoring the “good” parents inside the mourner (1940:156).

According to Klein, the mourner repeats in a transitory way the normal manic-depressive processes of early infancy. The normal feeling of possessing the perfect loved object (idealised) inside is threatened by one's own ambivalence insofar as loss signifies imperfection. Coping with sorrow and the distress of normal grief requires the belief that the "good objects" in one's inner world hold sway over the "bad" ones that threaten to destroy psychological security (1940: 157). Klein maintains that it is only gradually, by regaining trust in external objects and values of various kinds, that the mourner is able once more to strengthen his or her confidence in the lost loved person: "Then he can again bear to realise that this object was not perfect, and yet not lose trust and love for him, nor fear his revenge" (1940: 158). In this respect, Klein touches on the important aspect of "forgiveness" that is fundamental to working through the loss. Forgiveness recreates security in the inner world: inner objects come to life again, re-creative processes can set in and hope returns (1940: 163). At this stage in mourning, suffering can become productive.

The process of mourning, therefore, deepens the individual's relation to his inner objects. For this to happen, feelings of increased comfort alternate with distress. Klein notes that, "(In mourning as well as in infantile development, inner security comes about not by a straightforward movement but *in waves*)" (1940: 164 - my emphasis). While she places this observation in parentheses, it is very significant that Klein recognises that the mourner does not move through linear phases or stages. Like Freud, she too recognises that the process is gradual ("bit by bit"). For Freud, however, resistance to letting go of the loved object dominates. Klein (1940: 165), on the other hand, emphasises that the crisis of a present death repeats the struggle against the chaos inside, specifically the need to rebuild one's inner world, to recover and restore little by little the "good" internal objects that are also felt to be lost.

For Klein, the fundamental difference between normal and abnormal mourning pivots on the establishment of internal "good objects" in early infancy. Successful mourning balances the extremes of the "divine" and the "demonic". Our "good" objects are imperfect but loving and loveable; so are we. Failure to complete the work of mourning - the extreme of which is a manic-depressive state - means that one has not resolved or passed beyond the normal infantile depressive position (1940: 174). One is still denying the resistance of the world; still stymied by loss/death.

Klein, unlike Freud, places more emphasis in a relational perspective; others can also facilitate the grief process: "If the mourner has people whom he loves and who share his grief, and if he can accept their sympathy, the restoration of the harmony in his inner world is promoted, and his fears and distress are more quickly reduced" (1940: 165). Nevertheless, her main position is that the individual must "rebuild with anguish the inner world, which is felt to be in danger of deteriorating and collapsing" (1940: 156). Like psychoanalytic and attachment theorists, Klein stresses the conflicts that

occur within the psychic apparatus and neglects to emphasise the individual's social world. She also does not explore the mutual impact of mourning within the family. However, Klein's concept of mourning as a repetition of the early "depressive" position, and the need to reinstate not only the person that has been lost but also the "good" parents within the self suggests that, with a loss, *object relations* are reactivated and the mourner will have to revisit the primary (maternal/paternal) bonds as well. This has relevance for sibling loss.

4.1.3 Erich Lindemann (1944) - The Medical Model

The psychoanalytic bereavement literature emerged predominantly from the study of clinical populations. Psychiatrist, Erich Lindemann (1944), appears to have been one of the first to have made the first-hand study of acute grief in adulthood his main concern. Lindemann described uncomplicated grief in terms of a series of symptoms that may seem quite extreme from a traditional psychiatric perspective but that are in fact normal following the loss of a significant other. However, while Lindemann agrees, in essence, that "acute grief would seem to be a normal reaction to a very distressing situation", because of its remarkable uniformity and in order to comply with medical-psychiatric interests and concerns at the time, he defined grief as a "definite syndrome" (1944:148).

Lindemann's contribution to the study of grief lies in the fact that his research, which was conducted during the Second World War (a very traumatic time in his society), described most of the psychological and somatic reactions of normal and acute grief that have been mentioned ever since his study. Significant too is that, similar to the phenomenological research method, Lindemann's investigation consisted of a series of interviews during which the psychiatrist "avoided all suggestions and interpretations ..." (1944: 149) and allowed the patients to describe their emotions. The picture of grief which emerges is, therefore, based on the spontaneous and direct responses of bereaved patients. Thus, although Lindemann's research was published more than sixty years ago, his rich descriptions of the experience of acute grief remain relevant to this day.

Lindemann's model of bereavement as a crisis period of increased vulnerability is considered one of the classic works in "preventive community psychiatry" (1944: 148). His work on grief reactions also inspired Gerald Kaplan's work, 1964 (in Shapiro, 1994: 33), on crisis theory. From this perspective, as noted by Shapiro (1994), any life crisis, including the crisis of loss, presents a challenge that can lead to a more adaptive reorganisation of the personality. Work in the area of adults coping with stressful life events has also been applied, more recently, to the stress of losing a family member. The mitigating effects of social support in reducing health risks (both mental and physical) for adults in stressful life circumstances have been documented not only in the adult and family stress literature but also in the adult bereavement literature, eg. Osterweis *et al.*, and Raphael, 1983 (in Shapiro, 1994: 33).

In his study, Lindemann (1944: 149) interviewed 101 patients drawn from four different groups: patients who had lost a relative during the course of treatment, relatives of patients who had died in hospital, bereaved disaster victims (Cocoanut Grove night club fire), and relatives of members of the armed forces. Lindemann (1944:148) found that this acute grief “syndrome” may appear immediately after a crisis; it may be delayed; it may be exaggerated or apparently absent.

He describes five major “symptoms” of normal, acute and uncomplicated grief: “somatic distress”, “preoccupation with the image of the deceased”, “guilt”, “hostile reactions”, and “loss of patterns of conduct” (1944: 141-142). Like Freud, Lindemann noticed how disrupted the mourner's everyday activities become: “The bereaved is surprised to find how large a part of his customary activity was done in some meaningful relationship to the deceased and has now lost its significance” (1944:150). Lindemann also added a sixth characteristic of normal grief. The phenomenon is not as conspicuous as the other characteristics but is striking enough to colour the whole picture, i.e. the deceased takes on physical and/or behavioural traits of the deceased, especially symptoms that the deceased may have shown at the time of the tragedy (1944: 151). In Freudian language, the mourner identifies with the deceased.

Relevant to the participants of the present study, Lindemann (1944: 152-154) pinpoints what happens when mourning does not run a healthy course. He refers to “morbid grief reactions”, i.e. “distortions of normal grief”: (i) The most frequent reaction is *delay* or *postponement*. He notes that if the loss occurs at a time when the patient has to cope with important tasks and/or when there is a need to maintain the morale of others, he may show little or no reaction for weeks or even for years. One form of this delayed reaction is the situation where a patient develops the grief reaction at the time when he himself is as old as the person who died; (ii) Then there are “*Distorted reactions*”, i.e. where the delayed reactions may occur after an interval which was not marked by any behavioural problems or distress, but in which there was a change in the patient's behaviour. These alterations may be considered manifestations of an unresolved grief reaction which Lindemann found responded well to psychiatric intervention if recognised.

Successful *grief work* for Lindemann involves, “emancipation from the bondage to the deceased, readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing, and the formation of new relationships” (1944: 151). He notes that one of the big obstacles to this work seems to be the fact that many patients try to avoid the intense distress connected with the grief experience and to avoid the expression of emotion necessary for it.

Unfortunately, Lindemann believed that the normal course of grief is time-limited. Theorising on the basis of the medical model, Lindemann posits that the normal *grief work* takes approximately four to

six weeks. Eight to ten psychiatric interviews should “...settle an uncomplicated and undistorted grief reaction” (1944:152). Beyond the four to six weeks, lingering grief with persistent symptoms may be considered “morbid”. This statement not only belies experience with the grieving process, it also contradicts Lindemann's insightful statements about *delayed* reactions.

4.1.4 John Bowlby - Attachment Theory

Bowlby's (1961a, 1961b, 1973, 1979, 1980) framework for understanding loss is inextricably linked to his theory of attachment and separation. He integrates his initial embrace of the object relations viewpoint with an ethological perspective. Thus, his theory of attachment includes the survival benefits of attachment bonds. Separation from mother or other significant person in childhood *is* loss and the child responds with a series of characteristic behaviours, including crying, protest, and a concerted search to find the lost attachment figure. Bowlby's analysis of grief and mourning, therefore, rests on an appreciation of instinctual bonds that tie human young to a mother or other caretaker and which he believes are built on the same general pattern as they are in other “mammalian species” (1961b: 482). Thus, he views mourning as a psycho-biological process. Both the yearning to recover and the urge to reproach the lost person - unrealistic because the person cannot be recalled - fit within a larger story of evolution, adaptive significance and survival (1961b: 485).

Bowlby (1961b: 483) argues that the sequence of responses - protest, despair, detachment - is a sequence that, in one variant or another, is characteristic of all forms of mourning. Loss, especially when it is unexpected, triggers: (1) a phase of *protest* during which the bereaved person is striving either in actuality, or in thought and feeling, to recover the lost person and is reproaching him or her for desertion; (2) a phase of *despair* during which there is subdued pining where alternating hope and despair may continue for a long time; (3) a phase of *detachment* during which some measure of emotional detachment from the lost person is achieved (1961b: 483). Behaviour in this phase becomes reorganised on the basis of the person's permanent loss.

Ties binding the child to his mother do not quietly fade during the detachment phase, nor is there simple forgetting (Bowlby, 1961b: 486). On the contrary, Bowlby's research data reveal that during this phase, the responses that bind the child to his mother and lead him to strive to recover her are subject to a defensive process. In some way they are removed from consciousness. Pertinent to the situation of the sibling in silent mourning, these responses remain latent and ready to become active again when circumstances change.

Mourning, related to attachment, separation and loss, is biologically based and normal. The matter of chronological age is irrelevant. Whether infant or adult, grief responses at any age are similar; they follow the same sequence (Bowlby, 1961b: 484). Although the intensity of grief varies considerably

from individual to individual and the length of each phase also varies, according to Bowlby there is nevertheless a basic overall pattern: "...the behavioural sequence is accompanied by a sequence of subjective experiences which begins with anxiety and anger, proceeds through pain and despair, and, if fortune smiles, ends with hope" (Bowlby, 1961a: 331).

Bowlby (1961b: 484) saw anger as a normal response too; an immediate, integral and almost invariable response to loss rather than an indication that mourning had taken a "pathological" course. Anger erupts not only over the loss but also *at* the lost person. The adaptive function of this anger is both to recover the lost person and to dissuade him or her from deserting again. Hence, expressing this powerful urge is a necessary condition for mourning to run a healthy course (1961b: 485). Although the overt expression of anger is so obviously futile, unrealistic and hopeless, it is not pathological. Likewise, the person's disbelief that loss has really occurred ("denial") is not necessarily indicative of pathology. It is another adaptive response. It seems that only after every effort has been made to recover the lost person, is the individual able to admit defeat and to orient himself to a world from which the loved person is accepted as irretrievably missing. For Bowlby, *protest* is as much a part of an *adult's response* to loss, especially a sudden loss (1961b: 485).

A main characteristic of pathological mourning, according to Bowlby, is the inability overtly to express these urges to recover and to scold the lost person, with all the yearning for and anger with the lost person that they entail. What happens if these normal drives to recover and reproach are split off and remain unexpressed? Then they remain repressed and ambivalent but still active within the personality. "Forgotten", but not gone, they find expression in distorted ways, generating "character disturbance and neurotic illness" (1961b: 485).

On the other hand, Bowlby also takes a conservative stand. During the immaturity and extreme dependency stage of infancy, it is normal that the urges to recover and reproach are accelerated. Healthy *adult* mourning, however, should delay the defensive processes. If defensive processes are accelerated as in childhood, the urges to recover and reproach the lost person have no chance of being extinguished and instead persist with consequences that may be serious. The inability of the adult to extinguish these urges is pathological (1961b: 487).

Based on the records of Lindemann (1944) and Marris, 1958 and amplified by the studies of Parkes, 1969, 1971 (in Bowlby, 1970/1979: 82) on adult grief and mourning following the loss of a spouse, Bowlby added an important first phase to his original three phases of grief. His final four phases (1970/1979: 83; 1980: 85) are described as follows :

1. *Numbing*. The first phase involves an initial period of *shock* and *numbness* that usually lasts from a few hours to a week - possibly interrupted by outbursts of extreme distress and/or anger. An inability to fully grasp the loss and feelings of disbelief are dominant in this phase.
2. *Yearning and Searching*. This phase involves the bereaved individual's desire to recover the lost person, and may last months and often years. Searching and pining, including restlessness and anger are all part of this phase. Memories of the deceased preoccupy the mourner and become the central focus of his/her thoughts.
3. *Disorganisation and Despair* (“emotional chaos”). During this phase, survivors realise that searching is futile. Behaviour patterns associated with the lost “object” are no longer possible or have lost their meaning and purpose. This outward disorganisation of life is accompanied by inner responses of depression, apathy and despair. For Bowlby, disorganisation is essential for reorganisation and building up of new patterns of behaviour.
4. *Detachment and Reorganisation*. The culminating phase involves *detachment* and *reorganisation* to a greater or lesser extent. This phase involves many strong emotions. It is a phase of recovery in which bereaved individuals revise their sense of self and diminish their psychological involvement with the deceased. During this phase aspects of the second and third phases are still present but not nearly as dominant.

Bowlby stresses that these phases are not cut-and-dried and that they can occur at any time during grieving. It is common for one to go through the process, come out of it, then slip back into one or more of the phases. However, while the time that it takes to move from one stage to another may vary greatly, emergence through these phases is, at the very least, dependent upon the individual's expression of feelings. Only then can there be a more favourable outcome to resolution of the loss.

Bowlby (1970/1979: 99) recognises that bereavement does not occur in isolation but that it becomes a “family problem”: “We need to know what changes occur in the dynamic structure of a family when a leading member dies... Apart from emotional problems the most immediate problem is one of roles.” Although he is speaking about the loss of a spouse, the problem of roles has relevance for the present study. Unfortunately, Bowlby's only reference to sibling loss in adulthood is that it is “not frequently followed by disordered mourning” (Bowlby, 1980: 177).

4.1.5 Elizabeth Kubler-Ross - Stage Theory

Phase and stage theorists (Bowlby, 1979, 1980; Kubler-Ross, 1969/1985) tend to regard grief more positively than proponents of the medical model (Lindemann, 1944). Grief is not just an agony with

which we cope, but a form of coping with loss. Ever since Freud's (1917/1957) seminal essay, "On mourning and melancholia", everyone who has spoken about grief has referred to it as a process. In the stage model, there are qualitative leaps from one stage to another. Time is not salient in the constructions of stage progress. Rather, it is assumed that the time it takes to move from one stage to another varies greatly.

The leading proponent of the stage theory, Kubler-Ross (1969/1985: 34-121) discusses five stages that a terminally ill person goes through in coming to terms with the reality of his or her approaching death. While not everyone will go through all the stages, it would seem that, according to this stage theory, one begins in denial and hopefully ends with acceptance:

1. *Denial and isolation.* In this stage, denial acts as a buffer after catastrophic news, allowing the patient to collect her/himself and, with time, to mobilise other less radical defences.
2. *Anger.* When one works through the denial to a point where one cannot deny one's approaching death any longer, one is freed to experience what is coming and becomes angry.
3. *Bargaining.* The third stage, "bargaining" is less well known but, according to Kubler-Ross, it is equally helpful to the terminally ill patient. If one has not been able to face the sad facts of the illness in the first period and has been angry in the second, possibly one can enter into some agreement that may postpone the inevitable from happening.
4. *Depression.* When the patient is no longer able to deny his/her illness and the fact of death, anger is replaced with a sense of great loss.
5. *Acceptance.* If the patient is allowed to be sorrowful in the preceding stage, final acceptance will be easier.

Although Kubler-Ross' theory focuses on individuals who are terminally ill rather than on those who have lost a loved one, her model has been extended beyond the context in which it arose. Lukas and Seiden (1987/1990), for example, have adapted her model to explicate the traumatic experience of losing a loved one (mother, father, sibling or friend) to suicide. Pertinent to loss in a family is the stage of "bargaining", where members of the family protect each other by remaining silent.

4.1.6 Theories of Ongoing Attachment

Attachment and Object Relations theories, by pointing out that development requires the stable internal representation of an attachment figure, have made important contributions to understanding

both childhood and adult bereavement. Transitional experiences, in the sense used by Winnicott, during which the deceased makes a transition from physical external object to internalised object, are a vital part of bereavement, providing a sense of safety necessary for ongoing development. In order to cope with the loss of a significant other, we internalise (in Kleinian terms, “restore”) the lost loved one. In that way we realise that the relationship is never lost and that the loved one lives on within us. The observation that children maintain a connection to their deceased parents is not new (Bowlby, 1980; Klein, 1940; Worden, 1996).

A number of researchers involved with sibling loss have also proposed a new model related to the process of bereavement that involves the concept of ongoing attachment and continuing bonds (Hogan and DeSantis, 1996). Ties with the lost loved one are not severed, rather, the relationship changes and continues in a different context. Silverman *et al.* (1995: 132) argue that the concept of internalisation does not adequately describe the process that bereaved children undergo. Observing children a year after the loss of a parent, the authors found that these children developed an inner representation of the dead parent that was much more dynamic and interactive than the term “internalisation” suggests and that seemed to change “with time as the child developed” (1995: 133). This ongoing, but altered, relationship appeared to help them to cope with the loss and with the accompanying changes in their lives.

4.1.7 Systems Models of Grief

Systems models of grief view loss as a change within a system which affects those that are more closely involved and whose responses set in motion a secondary change impacting on all the members in the family and the wider social structures. Like an “earthquake”, the loss most strongly affects those that are closest, but gradually it shakes the whole system (Gelcer, 1986).

The family systems approach to grief focuses on what happens in a family when one of its members is lost (Gelcer, 1986; Gilbert, 1996). This approach emphasises the need for major re-alignments and the reallocation of roles within a family. Not only does each member of the family have to adjust his or her status from being a wife/husband, parent, brother or sister but “the family as a group also has to adjust from being the complete whole that it was to the family minus one that it has become” (Riches & Dawson, 2000: 38). While difficulties may be encountered, sharing conversation and collective remembering is emphasised in the systems model as a way of providing a new reality that includes the death and its consequences (Gelcer, 1986; Gilbert, 1996; Nadeau, 1998).

4.1.8 The Existential-Phenomenological Perspective

Moving beyond the defined limits of theory, the existential-phenomenological perspective enables us to envisage loss and mourning as effecting a profound and lasting transformation of existence. In

existential-phenomenological philosophy, death becomes a central point of reference for human life, and our being in the world is seen as a “Being-towards-death” (Heidegger, 1927/1962). For Heidegger, anxiety experienced in a human crisis is not only normal, but indeed positive, as it pulls the person back from involvement with “inauthentic life” (i.e. the meaningless or frantic activity and idle chatter of the “public world”) and confronts him with “authentic beingness” (Chessick, 1986: 89). Heidegger's (1927/1962) concept of Dasein as being-there-in-the-world-with-others embraces the individual's relational world. We are inextricably linked to others.

Both the existential and phenomenological philosophies deal extensively with death and allow opportunity for grappling with death and the profound *lived* experience of loss. The philosophical presuppositions that “all living is also dying” and that suffering is part of our being human, in fact acknowledge death and loss as one of the many possibilities given to man in his encounter with the world (Kruger, 1979/1988: 80). As such, this perspective stresses the importance of the lived experience of the loss of a significant other rather than attempting to explain the process or to distinguish between “pathological” and “normal” grief.

Søren Kierkegaard, writing in the 1850s, has contributed a great deal to our understanding of loss and grief. Based on his own suffering, Kierkegaard provides us with an understanding of human suffering that has helped to deepen our knowledge of what it means to lose a loved one.

Kierkegaard reveals the helpful significance of our agony. He encourages us to dwell with our anxiety and to sorrow through our suffered losses. “Sorrow-ing”, he says, is the only deep “cure” for depression and despair. In his “Works of Love”, Kirkegaard (1847/1962: 57) counsels:

“I do not have the right to harden myself against the pains of life, for I *ought* to sorrow; but neither have I the right to despair, for I *ought* to sorrow; furthermore, neither do I have the right to stop sorrowing, for I *ought* to sorrow.”

Sorrow must be sorrowed. Sorrow never ends. “Sorrow-ing” prevents us from falling into despair; from becoming depressed. Sorrow, according to Kierkegaard, is only truly surmounted insofar as it endures its own truth. Getting over the sorrow, surmounting it, means that we dwell enduringly, or we abide by the truth that it discloses. Like Freud, Kierkegaard stresses that sorrowing/mourning takes a long time; it is a “work”, a *labour*. It does not come from short-term therapy as noted by Lindemann (1944). And like Freud, Kierkegaard maintains that, in the face of loss, depression arises when there was something “wrong” in the relationship before the death and the loss simply brought it to the surface.

How is the grief finally resolved?

It is in respect of the resolution of grief, that Freud and Kierkegaard part ways. In Kierkegaard's writing on sorrow the “work” of mourning completes itself with the spiritual act of “concern”, “making reparation”, or through forgiveness. In this respect, contributions are made by Object Relations theorists: D.W. Winnicott, Ronald Fairbairn, Melanie Klein and Harry Guntrip. For Kierkegaard *forgiveness* is the ultimate resolution of the loss of a loved one. We end this because finally we forgive the other and self. The authentic resolution to *grief work* is the acceptance of the loved other as fallible and flawed. Forgiveness opens the door to making reparation. The correlate of the capacity to forgive the imperfect other is the ability to accept and forgive our own imperfections, our real or imagined wrongdoings. One receives and one gives even though one may not condone or approve of one's actions or those of the other. Love cannot be perfect. Still one is loved, even though one may not deserve it.

Movement from the intra-psychic to the relational aspects of the loss of a significant other, as reflected in the above overview of grief theories, is also reflected in the literature and research review that follows.

4.2 Literature and Research Review of Sibling Loss

An extensive literature search on sibling loss reveals several ways of approaching this unique loss experience, which seem to be related to the trends in the development of psychology as a science:

- The intra-psychic approach deals more specifically with the individual *reactions* of surviving siblings to the loss. Various reactions (emotional, physiological and behavioural) have been identified that apply more specifically to the *direct* loss of a brother or sister. Developmental issues, i.e. the surviving sibling's age and level of cognitive and emotional development and how the different psychosocial developmental tasks impact on the sibling's loss experience, are important in terms of how the individual copes with the death and loss. An appreciation of developmental issues enables us to focus on the individuality of the bereaved sibling but frequently does not take into account the individual's social world;
- The relational approach acknowledges the sibling's relational world which includes parents, friends and peers, and other “less significant” others. The responses of others, as well as the nature of the support received from parents and others, are recognised as either inhibiting or facilitating the integration of the loss of a brother or sister;

- The family structural or systemic approach emphasises the need for major re-alignments and the reallocation of roles within a family, focusing on what occurs in a family when a member is lost. The importance of making sense of the loss through shared memories and mutual storytelling as part of the process of working through the loss and establishing a “new” family, is emphasised.

How has this shift in interest evolved?

As already mentioned, as early as 1917 Sigmund Freud wrote a seminal work on loss and grief that gave rise to a host of mimics and critics. In “On Mourning and Melancholia”, Freud distinguishes clearly and trenchantly between normal grief over a significant loss, and the failure to mourn successfully. His clarification names ambivalence about the lost “object” as the emotional state that leads to prolonged, excessive and unremitting melancholia. Unfortunately, the psychoanalytic tradition, largely because of its intention to heal psychic dis-ease, for a long time focused upon the pathological outcomes of suffering loss. In terms of the phenomenon of this study, the psychoanalytic and psychiatric literature on sibling loss, with few exceptions, was biased in the direction of the psychopathology of survivors for more than sixty years. While some researchers (Pollock, 1978; 1988) also found a correlation between childhood sibling loss and later creativity, sibling bereavement, prior to the 1980s, was examined primarily as a pathological condition (Rosenzweig, 1943; Pollock, 1962, 1972; Volkan, 1972, 1978; Lieberman, 1978).

Between 1970 and 1980, researchers entered the field with an intention to balance the trend. From one perspective, it appeared that sibling survivors, the “forgotten grievers” (Zelauskas, 1981) or neglected mourners, and their disenfranchised grief, would no longer be overlooked. In point of fact, the history of the study of siblings merely mirrors the shifting trend in the culture at large and in research in particular. Stated somewhat differently, in following the course of the research on sibling loss, one finds both the evolution of psychological interests throughout modernity, and the entrenchment in psychology’s original commitment to the paradigm and method of the natural sciences.

My review of the literature, although extensive, is selectively representative, not exhaustive. Therefore, it is appropriate to give a few examples of the above statement:

During late-modernity (1980s and 1990s), the culture as a whole, and psychological theory more specifically, made a turn away from the intra-psychic, clinical and psychiatrically based paradigms toward community-based and relational approaches. Consequently, sibling loss was researched from those perspectives. Studies of sibling bereavement focused on identifying some of the variables and conditions of the grief process with a view to helping children who were at risk of developing psychological problems in later life. However, the dominant paradigm did not change. Quantification

was still the preferred research tool. Questionnaires, checklists and inventories blanketed the phenomenon. Instead of investigating directly the siblings' experiences with their grief, researchers adopted the mainstream third-person, retrospective perspective. Second-hand reports (parents' and teachers' perceptions) of the sibling bereavement process were obtained and few studies addressed what children themselves saw as they observed the world in the absence of their sibling.

As is characteristic with this style of studying human phenomena, "design flaws" are noted by critics and researchers (Balk, 1991; Cicirelli, 1995; Coleman & Coleman, 1984; Davies, 1999; Walker, 1993) alike, and "contradictory results" abound. However, the hope remains that with better-controlled and longitudinal studies a perception of the whole experience will emerge. A valuable theme that did emerge from traditional quantitative studies, is that sibling loss is so complex, multi-dimensional, relational, and influenced by unfolding time, that it eludes the method of measurement which is best suited to variables that can be controlled in a cause-effect way in the frozen present.

As we neared the millennium, several researchers also began to see it that way, and qualitative research, grounded theory and other forms of qualitative research interviewing were also employed. By gathering first-person data, these studies not only deepened our understanding of sibling loss, but also affirmed the invisibility of bereaved siblings and their grief. A common thread running through the literature is that no matter what the age at which the loss occurs, surviving siblings seem to be overlooked. As succinctly described by Cicirelli (1995: 199): "The parents are the chief mourners in the first part of life, supplanted by a spouse and children later on, with the feelings of siblings ignored by others and suppressed by the siblings themselves."

Despite the flaws and problems that beset quantitative research studies, one can attempt to draw some conclusions from them. The interested reader is referred to various reviews of work concerning sibling loss in childhood and adolescence (Coleman & Coleman, 1984; Balk, 1991; Davies, 1994; Walker, 1993). A literature overview by Vande Kemp (1999) also includes sibling losses in adulthood.

Two additional emerging and fundamentally crucial themes emanating from these reviews are that sibling grief is long-lasting and that sibling loss does not occur in a vacuum. The interaction in the family as well as the existence of a supportive social network may either inhibit or facilitate the grief work of bereaved siblings. As with the development of any new perspective, it is a rediscovery of things long known which only gradually gain acceptance. While some of the earliest researchers noted the significance of the context of grieving within a family and a community (Cain *et al.*, 1964; Krell & Rabkin, 1979; Rosen, 1984-85), unfortunately few attempts have been made to describe the whole range of phenomena which can be observed in these children. Studies that incorporate the bereaved

sibling's relational world are sparse. Their limited numbers are in sharp contrast to the body of research that addresses individual reactions and behavioural responses or family and/or societal responses. In sum, studies pertaining to the experience of sibling loss as a *gestalt* are rare and few studies provide a unifying description of such a loss. Coleman and Coleman (1984: 130) ascribe this, in part, to "the lack of a well-defined framework for considering the whole experience of the child."

Although the emphasis in the present study is on qualitative research, in an attempt to highlight aspects of sibling loss which have frequently been focused upon in the literature, selective empirical scientific studies are also reviewed in order to provide a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon. Case studies, where relevant, are also included.

It must also be mentioned at this point that the studies in this review concern the western family and western culture and do not necessarily pertain to other cultures. In addition, while the focus in this study is on the loss of a sibling in young adulthood, I also address childhood and adolescent sibling loss since, to date, children and adolescents constitute the developmental groups to which most research on sibling loss has been directed.

To aid in summarisation, and to create a framework within which the material can be presented, the studies are grouped into three broad categories which I have identified as the primary foci of enquiry to date, i.e. individual aspects; familial aspects; and societal aspects of sibling loss. These three categories are to be seen as inextricably interrelated. All three interact in unique ways for each bereaved sibling and, to a greater or lesser extent, all play a role in co-constituting the sibling's loss experience. They are separated here for purposes of the presentation of the literature. Within these broader categories, a developmental framework (i.e. losses in childhood and adolescence, and losses in adulthood) will be used as most of the studies focus either on childhood and adolescence as a group, or on adult sibling loss. These three categories are similar to those used by Vande Kemp (1999) and Cicirelli (1995), and are grounded in the sibling bond.

4.2.1 Individual Aspects of Sibling Loss

Individual reactions to the loss of a sibling refer to the *direct* loss of a significant other and to the emotions that accompany such a loss. As already noted, the sibling relationship is unique. It is usually the longest-lasting and, in some ways, the most taken for granted social connection an individual will ever experience (Moss & Moss, 1986). The loss of a sibling has implications for self-identity, for personal development, for relationships with parents and other surviving siblings, and for long-term relationships throughout adult life (Robinson & Mahon, 1997). Given the significance of this relationship, it is not difficult to understand that the loss of a sibling can have profound effects upon brothers and sisters – "effects that permeate the lives of surviving siblings" (Davies, 1999: 10).

4.2.1.1 Sibling Losses in Childhood and Adolescence

Children and adolescents are the developmental groups to which most research on sibling loss and bereavement has been directed. Research into general loss during childhood has tended to focus on the level of cognitive development and whether the child is able to understand the irreversibility, universality and non-functionality of death (Corr, 1995; Cicirelli, 1995). There has also been much debate in the psychological literature as to whether a young child is able to mourn effectively (Bowlby, 1980; Furman, 1984) or not until adolescence (Wolfenstein, 1966) because of immature ego development and/or failure to attain a level of “person” constancy (Piaget) or “object” permanence (Winnicott). While there is sound evidence that young children do not have an understanding of the finality of death (Nagy, 1959) and that they need help to understand what is happening, Bowlby (1980) attests that mourning does occur in childhood and that even very young children respond to the *feelings* resulting from separation from those to whom they are attached.

The literature highlights a broad range of reactions (immediate, short-term and long-term) that siblings may manifest as part of their experience of the loss of a brother or sister.

- **Grief Responses**

An early and perhaps the most comprehensive study (up to the 1990s) of children’s reactions to the loss of a sibling is the retrospective exploratory study by Cain *et al.* (1964) of 58 children (two-and-a-half to fourteen years), who were psychiatric patients. Data were collected in most part from closed files of materials ranging from outpatient evaluations to years of intensive inpatient treatment (1964: 742). Sibling deaths ranged widely from chronic or sudden illnesses, through to car accidents, drowning, burns, accidental shootings, and severe beatings. The authors included cases where the deceased sibling died *before* the sibling they studied was born because some of these bereaved siblings shared in so many ways the specific problems seen in the primary group of children.

In this study, the authors identified eight reactions that they felt were substantially related to the subjects’ loss of their sibling (1964: 743-750), i.e. guilt; distorted concepts of illness and death; disturbed attitudes toward doctors, hospitals and religion; fears of death (“death phobias”); comparisons, identification and misidentification; disturbances in cognitive functioning related, more specifically, to the death of their sibling; impact of changes in the family structure; and impact of parental mourning.

In the psychiatric population studied by Cain *et al.* (1964), guilt was strongly present in approximately half of the cases, even 5 or more years after the sibling’s death. These children felt responsible for the death and insisted that it was their fault. Some children felt that they should have died too, or should have died instead of the sibling. Suicidal thoughts, sometimes motivated by a wish to be reunited with

their brother or sister, were also evident. Guilt was handled differently by each child according to his or her personality, with reactions including “depressive withdrawal, accident-prone behaviour, punishment seeking, constant provocative testing...and many forms of acting out” (1964: 743) behaviour.

Cain *et al.*, (1964) found that guilt was particularly intense in those surviving siblings who had been involved in the circumstances of the death and where, within the family, the circumstances surrounding the loss had been shrouded in silence. Even though the sibling may have wanted to talk about the event, the authors note that parents were struggling with their own “self-accusations” and needed “to avoid the open assessment of blame” (1964: 744). Thus, parents remained silent and there was no open discussion of the death. In some instances guilt was imposed by the parents, not in the sense of blaming the child for the sibling's death, but for not showing any sadness or grief at the loss of their brother or sister (1964: 745); i.e. for not mourning in an approved way.

Other symptoms included confused, *distorted concepts of illness and death*. Cain *et al.* (1964) found these to be most prominent amongst those children whose siblings died due to illness. For these children, concrete disease symptoms, e.g. “coughs, colds, ‘high temperatures’ and bruises meant that you would die” (1964: 746). Some also struggled to reconcile the fact of their sibling's death with the conventional adult statement that “people die when they are very old” and for almost one-third of these children, “growing up, growing older, meant you would die” (1964: 746).

Related to this were *disturbed attitudes toward doctors, hospitals and religion*. The authors found that the majority of the surviving children had a heightened fear of doctors, and going to a hospital was equated with dying. Almost as strong as the above fears was the confusion of how a loving God could have “taken away” their sibling (Cain *et al.*, 1964: 746). Fears of death (“*death phobias*”) were prominent in almost all of the children's responses. The surviving siblings developed a heightened awareness of death, feeling that it could strike at other loved ones, as well as at themselves. The children were often convinced not only that they would also die, but that they would die either at the same age or from the same cause or under the same circumstances as the deceased sibling (1964: 747). This is not only prevalent in childhood but also in adult sibling-loss as illustrated by Engel (1975) in his analysis of his own “anniversary reactions” following the sudden death of his twin brother at the age of 49 years.

Cain *et al.* (1964) found that family variables included changes in sibling and parent-child relations, profound and prolonged parental mourning, and protracted mother absences during illness of the sibling prior to death. These family variables will be discussed in greater detail under 4.2.2 (“Familial aspects of sibling loss”).

While there may be a perception that children drawn from a psychiatric population, such as the one cited above, would present with more ambivalence and guilt, it is significant that this theme presents quite strongly in community-based samples as well. For example, Rosen's (1984-85) findings appear to concur with Cain *et al* (1964) that *guilt* is a common reaction of bereaved siblings. Half of the respondents in Rosen's (1984-1985) study reported guilt feelings related to the death. They experienced guilt for being alive when the sibling had died, for being well when sibling was ill, and for having wished the sibling dead at some time in their relationship (1984-1985: 312). Rosen's findings add another dimension to the guilt experienced by siblings, i.e. that the child occasionally felt "special" for having experienced the loss of a brother or sister and subsequently felt guilty for having had that feeling. Other emotions included feeling sad, lonely, frightened, "numb" and angry.

Sadness was the most common reaction reported by Mahon and Page (1995) after a sibling's death and during the time since the death. The authors (1995: 20) found that sadness frequently coexisted with other feelings: shock; relief that their sibling did not have to suffer anymore; fear; and disbelief. Other feelings included a lack of understanding, anger and confusion. Several children reported a need to be alone or to be in a "comfortable place". Feelings of isolation were also common either because they chose to be alone or because they believed that everyone was focused on the child who had died and the needs of the parents.

Another more recent comprehensive conceptualisation of *childhood* sibling loss is that of Davies (1999). Using a qualitative approach (grounded theory), Davies' extensive study synthesises the findings from all her work (extending over 15 years) and provides a paradigm of sibling bereavement, based on the responses of siblings of all ages who had lost a brother or sister in childhood. This paradigm/model, drawn from a *general* population (as opposed to the *psychiatric* population studied by Cain *et al.*, 1964), includes the immediate, short- and long-term responses of bereaved siblings and demonstrates how these sibling responses may be influenced by individual, situational and environmental factors.

Davies (1999) identifies four responses of bereaved siblings, i.e. "I hurt inside", "I don't understand", "I don't belong" and "I'm not enough." According to this author, the first two, i.e. "I hurt inside" and "I don't understand", constitute the more immediate responses to the loss of a sibling. These responses are similar to those described in most literature about sibling bereavement and focus on the emotional/behavioural reactions of children and the cognitive responses that result from children's developing understanding about death. The other two responses, "I don't belong" and "I'm not enough" reflect the more long-term effects of sibling bereavement. Davies (1999: 199) also points out that the first response, "I hurt inside", stems from the "vulnerability of being human", of being attached to someone and missing that person when he or she is gone. The other three responses are

rooted in a vulnerability that arises from the child's dependence on the adults in their lives. She concludes that the way in which parents, older siblings and other adults respond to a sibling's pain will contribute to how bereaved siblings experience, "I don't understand", "I don't belong", and "I'm not enough." In brief, Davies describes the bereaved siblings' responses as follows:

(i) "*I hurt inside*" - This response encompasses all emotions typically associated with grief, including sadness, anger, frustration, loneliness, fear, irritability, guilt, restlessness, and a host of other responses - responses that are common to all who grieve. However, Davies (1999: 199) notes that, unlike adults, who may perhaps more readily describe their emotions, children may show their pain in different ways: "they may cry, withdraw, seek attention, complain, misbehave, pick fights easily, argue, have nightmares, fear going to bed at night, lose their appetite, or overeat."

(ii) "*I don't understand*" - While this response is influenced largely by children's level of cognitive development, Davies (1999: 200) posits that children's awareness of death only adds to their confusion if they are not helped to understand and to make sense of the death. When children are not given information and do not understand what has happened, they become even more anxious in a situation where they already feel overwhelmed by "unfamiliar sights and sounds" (1999: 200). Their own feelings are also confusing to them - e.g. it is puzzling to feel sad while at the same time feeling angry with the brother or sister for leaving.

(iii) "*I don't belong*". Davies (1999: 200) notes that a death in the family disrupts the normal routine of everyday life; the parents' grief, the "flurry of activity" and the consequent changes in the family structure, generate a sense of insecurity and a feeling in the surviving siblings that there is no place for them in the family. When children's own ways of responding to the loss are not tolerated, they feel even more as if they do not belong in their family. In addition, children who experience the death of a brother or sister often feel that they are different from others - especially from their peers - and may feel as if they do not belong with their friends either.

(iv) "*I'm not enough*" - Children may feel that the child who died was their parents' favourite child and that they, as surviving children, are "not enough" to make their parents happy ever again. Some surviving siblings, in attempting to understand why they survived, strive to be good at all they do, try to do more, striving "to prove that they are enough, that they are worthy enough to live" (Davies 1999: 201).

Other studies have described a host of emotional, physical and behavioural responses associated with sibling bereavement. These include: sleep disturbance, poor concentration, loneliness, guilt, feelings of powerlessness and helplessness, feeling different to peers, fear of dying, more frequent illness,

depression, anger, nightmares, suicidal thoughts, feeling uncomfortable if happy, feeling responsible for the death, feeling overprotected by parent(s), anger at God, increased grief at special times of the year, and believing that their parent(s) will never get over the death.

Several studies focus on identifying some of the variables and conditions of sibling loss, and to what extent they impact on the loss experience, with a view to preventing the development of psychological problems in later life. Some of these variables, i.e. the closeness of the pre-death relationship, the nature of the death, and time elapsed since the loss, will now be discussed.

- **The Nature of the Pre-death Relationship**

Bank and Kahn (1982) note that sibling relationships that are too close or too fused, and those that are too polarised and rejecting, may complicate the surviving sibling's grief. However, it has also been documented (Moss & Moss, 1986; Cicirelli, 1995) that sibling relationships are not unidimensional and some sibling pairs may have both strong positive and negative affective ties while others may have relatively weak ties. In addition, it is clear that sibling relationships are not static; relatively weak ties or conflicted early relationships may change with time.

Mahon and Page (1995) in fact comment on the changing nature of sibling relationships and the relevance of the closeness-distance dimension in an attempt to explain the differing bereavement responses of the three groups included in their study (i.e. pre-adolescent, adolescent, and those over 18 years of age). The authors report that “for many of the adolescent group, siblings were just beginning to work through competitive relationships and to form better relationships” so that “when this process was prematurely cut off, a perception of the unfairness of life was fuelled” (1995: 85).

In her study of *shared life space* and bereavement responses, Davies (1988; 1999) explored the pre-death relationship between siblings “as one aspect of the interpersonal environment” (1988: 340) that may be related to bereavement outcome in surviving siblings who have lost a brother or sister to cancer. Davies' findings, derived from an analysis of data obtained from 34 children (6-16 years) who were *closest in age* to the deceased sibling, and an analysis of the data pertaining to *all the siblings* in the same families, revealed that *closeness in age* was not related to behavioural responses during bereavement. Although, in both samples, there was a trend for greater “closeness” to be associated with more “internalising” behaviour (defined as “uncommunicative” or “social withdrawal”), the relationship was not significant (Davies, 1988: 346). Davies presents as a possible explanation for this finding, the fact that there may have been a weakness in the measurement of “closeness”. She points out that the Closeness Index comprised primarily items that reflected the *amount of life space shared* by the two siblings (i.e. “shared activities”, “shared time”, and “shared belongings”), and the *functions* that the siblings fulfil for one another (i.e. “confiding” and “defending”). Only one item, “*stated*

closeness”, attempted to measure the *perceived emotional closeness* between the two children. In the secondary analysis, where closeness in age was not considered, the difference between the 2 groups was significant. Those children who had the highest Internalising scores also had the highest scores on the Closeness Index.

This study is significant in that it highlights that the amount of life space shared by the siblings and the functions that they fulfil for one another, in themselves, do not reflect the dimension of closeness that has to do with the *meaning* that the relationship has for the survivor’s life (Davies, 1988). It is also significant in that it points to the value of the *qualitative* data that provided examples of relationships in which two siblings were described as being “very close” (for example, a 15 year old who was extremely close to his 2 year-old sister) even though they had not shared many of the other aspects of shared life space. Davies concludes that it is the *stated emotional closeness* in the relationship that is important in sibling bereavement and she suggests that further studies of shared life space should incorporate the concept of *centrality*; a concept presented by Bugen (1977, in Davies, 1988:346) as a determinant of the intensity of grief.

In a later article, Davies (1995) points out that the *emotional* closeness (as defined above) that exists between the siblings prior to the loss tends to be related to the outcome of the surviving child’s bereavement process. The closer the relationship, the more behaviour problems the surviving siblings demonstrate afterwards. However, she does not indicate whether, in the long-term, the sibling who experienced a close relationship with the deceased brother or sister is better able to integrate the loss than one who experienced a more conflicted relationship at the time of the loss. From Balk's (1983b: 151) study on adolescent grief reactions and self-concept perceptions (one of the few studies that included questions about the sibling *relationship*), it appears that those siblings whose relationship with the deceased had been strained, experienced more guilt and that this was long-lasting.

An interesting additional finding by Fanos (1996) is that although surviving adolescent siblings who lost a brother or sister to cystic fibrosis expressed differing degrees of actual involvement while growing up with their sibling, the deceased sibling was, nevertheless, “of great importance to the survivors” (1996: 160).

- **Circumstances of the Death**

Some researchers focus on specific types of losses for the insights that these studies may bring to those caring for bereaved siblings; for example, the impact on the bereaved sibling of a sudden or violent death, such as accident and murder, or of a stigmatised death, such as suicide or AIDS. Other researchers have also observed grief responses in children and adolescents even when there had been

no opportunity to establish a bond with the deceased sibling, as, for example, in the event of neonatal deaths, still births or when a brother or sister died before the birth of the sibling.

Since the majority of these studies have focused on childhood and adolescent sibling loss, these will be included under this category (although the findings, in some instances, may also apply to the loss of a sibling in adulthood).

- **Sudden or Unexpected Losses**

Various researchers have studied siblings after sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) which often leaves “parents devastated and guilt-ridden” (Cicirelli, 1995: 188). In a study by Mandell *et al.* (1988, in Cicirelli 1995), the researchers found that 44 of the 45 surviving children displayed some reaction to the loss including: “changes in sleep patterns, bedwetting, changes in interaction with the mother, and changes in interaction with peers ranging from being quiet and withdrawn to being aggressive” (Cicirelli, 1995:188).

Other instances of unexpected sibling death involve accidents, homicide or suicide. Sudden deaths are commonly experienced as traumatic and this is as true of sibling loss. Surviving siblings whose brother or sister dies suddenly not only experience the grief of loss, but they are also traumatised. Initial grief after such a death is characterised by greater stress. Applebaum and Burns (1991) found that symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder were nearly universal in a study of 20 sibling survivors of such deaths in childhood and adolescence. According to Davies (1999), accidental and violent deaths may be particularly difficult for surviving siblings, because accidents often imply preventability or fault that may or may not be resolved within the family. Cain *et al.* (1964) found that in about a third of their cases where a surviving sibling was somehow involved in the circumstances of the death, the silence surrounding the loss was striking and the guilt experienced was intense.

Deaths due to accidents or violence do not allow for any “anticipatory grieving” and “increase children’s sense of vulnerability” by creating a lingering worry about how the sibling died (Davies, 1999: 96-97). Although there is some doubt as to whether anything can prepare one for the actual loss of a significant other (Parkes, 1972/1975), there is evidence to suggest that if the death involved a stigmatised cause such as suicide, homicide, a drug overdose, or AIDS, surviving siblings would be especially prone to complicated mourning (Rando, 1993). The author found that siblings are significantly affected by a brother’s or sister’s death from an AIDS-related illness and that these survivors may well become the “disenfranchised of the disenfranchised” (Rando, 1993: 642).

Lukas and Seiden (1987/1990: 27) posit that the silence that surrounds a suicide “gets in the way of the healing that comes with normal grieving” and that suicide survivors experience something

qualitatively and quantitatively different from the experiences of survivors of natural and accidental deaths. Suicide survivors, also referred to as “survivor/victims”, are likely to experience more “guilt, anger (bordering on rage), and pain - feelings that go on for years” (Lukas & Seiden, 1987/1990: 5). Post-traumatic stress reactions are also common. One of the most painful things that emerged from the authors’ talks with suicide survivors (parents, siblings, as well as sons and daughters) was the realisation that someone whom they deeply cared about had *chosen* to leave them, which frequently left the survivor(s) “feeling worthless” (Lukas & Seiden, 1987/1990: 8).

- **Perinatal Loss: The “Invisible Loss”**

While the emotional closeness between siblings, and the amount of shared life space, are significant in terms of the intensity of grief and the impact that the loss has on a surviving sibling, perinatal losses (miscarriages, spontaneous abortions, stillbirths, and neonatal deaths) have also been recorded as potentially having a penetrating impact on surviving siblings.

Perinatal losses are generally “*invisible losses*” (Leon, 1990: 139) for the surviving or future sibling who “rarely sees the body or infant, may hear little or nothing about the pregnancy or death, and is given little opportunity to ask questions or to express feelings” (Cicirelli, 1995: 187). Sibling attachment to a new born can occur if the child was included in the experience of the pregnancy and prepared for the role of older brother or sister. When this role expectation is disrupted the child may experience grief which frequently goes unnoticed and unacknowledged.

Leon (1990) also notes that adolescents who lose a baby brother or sister may experience feelings of guilt over their sibling’s death as well as feelings of low self-esteem. Younger surviving children may be vulnerable to *misidentification* that occurs when parents use another child as a substitute for the deceased child. This may lead the surviving child to regression and the parents to favouritism. Occasionally the parents scapegoat the surviving child (Tooley, 1975, in Vande Kemp, 1999:357). Children born after the death of a sibling may become *replacement children*, conceived in order to allay the painfulness of grief over the previous baby who died (Cain *et al.*, 1964; Krell & Rabkin, 1979).

Long-term effects of such a loss have also been explored. Maria Rosen (1995: 75) demonstrates that the neonatal death of a sibling can have a profound effect when that loss is not mourned. In a case study the author describes a delayed reaction to sibling loss in an adult woman patient who had decided to start a family and who began to have unexplained panic attacks after making the decision to have a baby. In analysis it gradually became apparent that these panic attacks were a delayed reaction to the trauma of the loss of her baby brother (four days old) when she was 16 years old. She had looked forward to this new sibling and experienced the baby's death as a terrible blow.

Significantly, the patient reported that there was “very little discussion about it in the family; nor could she talk of it at school” (1995: 79). Cicirelli (1995: 188) notes that to prevent complications of grief, parents should include “the sibling in the parents’ grief and mourning process.” This was clearly lacking in this case and delayed the patient’s mourning.

Maria Rosen’s (1995) thesis is that inhibition of mourning can cause a block in the procreative capacity of a surviving sibling. In this case, the unmourned nature of the death of her brother had had a deadening effect on her feelings, including her own maternal feelings. Rosen describes the patient’s procreative capacity, which, having been inhibited for many years, became liberated and available to her through therapy.

- **Loss of a Twin**

Another implication of sibling death and bereavement is the role that siblings play in each other’s identity development. Bank and Kahn (1982) argue that siblings develop their identity in the presence of each other. Thus, the loss of a sibling may leave the survivor without an important referent. Although some non-twin siblings may have a powerful impact on each other’s identity, this aspect of the loss of a sibling is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in studies involving the loss of a twin.

It has been recorded that a special bond exists between twins (Engel, 1975; Wilson, 1995; Davies, 1999) and that the grief over the loss of a twin in childhood can be as profound and devastating as losing a parent (Riches & Dawson, 2000). Twins are known to play an even more central role in each other’s lives and identities than non-twin siblings possibly because of “identical genetic make-up, similarity of environments [when] growing up, and age-related experiences” (Wilson, 1995: 100). This is particularly true in the case of identical twins. As pointed out by Engel (1975: 32), “[a] central developmental issue for twins concerns the fact that separation and individuation must ultimately involve the twin as well as the mother.” Although there are indications that the intimacy and intensity of the twin bond facilitates separation from the mother, Engel notes that this may be replaced by a symbiosis between twins whose separation and individuation from each other may be overly delayed. When one dies, the surviving twin not only has to face life without a previously close companion and intimate partner but is also left to define his or her role in the absence of this important referent - the deceased brother or sister.

Engel (1975: 34) posits that anniversary reactions, identification with the deceased, the yearning for reunion, and other normal sibling bereavement issues and feelings, may be intensified by the unique developmental features of “twinning”, i.e. “the enduring diffuseness of ego boundaries between self and object representation; the narcissistic gains of twinship; and the delicate balance of the defences against aggression.” For many twins there is a sense of being incomplete parts of a whole. For Engel

(1975), every glance in the mirror, every misidentification with his twin by friends or colleagues (something which they had both enjoyed, and even exploited, when his brother was alive), became a painful reminder of the loss. In addition, Engel's pain of loss was weighted by the reactivated memories of his father's death and intensified the "pool of grief" (Moss & Moss, 1986: 410). Survivor guilt was also prevalent and reinforced by his perception of previous parental favouritism.

By using various examples of literary figures and artists, Davies (1999: 11-14) illustrates the ongoing impact of sibling loss when this occurs in childhood. She notes that, even among perinatal deaths, the loss, particularly of an identical twin (as in the life of Elvis Presley), may have an enduring effect upon the survivor, with survivor guilt experienced very intensely. The surviving twin may persistently feel lonely or detached, as if something were missing from his or her life.

- **Losses Due to a Life Threatening or Chronic Illness**

Turning to studies that select exclusively on the basis of losing a brother or sister to a chronic or life-threatening illness, we find a series of comparative and longitudinal studies that deal with childhood and adolescent sibling loss. As noted by Fanos (1996: xi), "technological advances, medical treatments and earlier diagnoses have allowed children with serious illnesses to live into their teens and beyond." Consequently, many children may live with chronically or terminally ill siblings for many years. This has implications for the loss experience of bereaved siblings, *inter alia* because the long years of illness generate stress in the whole family and disrupt many of the usual patterns of relating and behaving in the family. Parents facing the death of a child are understandably very preoccupied with the sick or dying child and the healthy sibling(s) are likely to be neglected. Cain *et al.* (1964: 749) found that these children become "essentially motherless", not only because the mother is emotionally drained by her ordeal, but also because of her physical absence.

In an early retrospective exploratory study of 20 families who had lost a child to leukemia, Binger *et al.* (1969: 416) found that one or more "previously well-adjusted siblings" showed significant behavioural problems that indicated difficulty in coping with the loss. While these healthy siblings showed signs of distress during the course of the sibling's illness, the authors found that more severe reactions followed the actual death of the sibling and persisted for a long time. A variety of physical symptoms and emotional difficulties: "enuresis, headaches, poor school performance, school phobia, depression, severe separation anxieties and persistent abdominal pains" (1969: 416), were reported by the parents of surviving siblings. Siblings also experienced feelings of guilt and a fear that they might also die. They perceived their parents' preoccupation with the sick child as a "rejection of themselves" and, in their own way, experienced "anticipatory grief reactions" (1969: 416).

In a follow-up article, Binger (1973: 196) concludes that the reactions of a child to a life threatening illness, and the subsequent death of a sibling, include not only the immediate physical and psychological grief responses but that, in some children, these symptoms continued towards “enduring symptoms and distortions in character structure.” His presentation supports the findings of Cain *et al.* (1964), in that Binger (1973: 197) also found that the child’s responses to the loss of a sibling were dependent on several factors: “the developmental stage of the child, the total response of the family, the natural history of the illness, and the extent to which the illness becomes intertwined with family conflicts.”

A less frequently cited early exploratory pilot study by Iles (1979) using grounded theory to explore the perception of five healthy siblings (between the ages of 7 and 12 years) during the illness of a brother or sister with cancer, provides further insights into the healthy siblings' world during this stressful time. In this study, Iles identified themes of “change, loss and growth in human relations and self concept” (1979: 371). Change was experienced in interpersonal relationships and in the external environment. Like Cain *et al.* (1964), Iles observed that there was a sense of loss of the parental relationship during the ill sibling’s hospitalisation. Frequent and/or prolonged absences of the mother from the home left the healthy sibling feeling left out; “not getting attention anymore” and “not having any family activities together” (1979: 373). These siblings also experienced more demands being placed on them within the family. For these siblings, the two areas that were especially difficult were the “empty house” phenomenon and the presence of “parent substitutes” (1979: 374), i.e. other people who took care of them during their parents’ absence.

In addition, all the siblings experienced a sense of loss in their relationship with the ill sibling due to changes wrought by the illness. Beyond an awareness of changes in ways of relating to their ill siblings, subjects were also very aware of changes in the physical appearance of their sick brother or sister. Subjects described tensions experienced within the school environment that were related to the altered appearance of their sibling and/or frequent absences from school for treatment purposes. Insensitive comments by children generated feelings of rejection, isolation, confusion and self-doubt in the healthy siblings themselves.

However, Iles (1979: 375) found that these very same circumstances also provided opportunities for growth. There was a greater awareness of their mother’s suffering; pride in being able to take care of younger siblings and of their own needs; gains in terms of knowledge and understanding about the physical symptoms of the disease and therapy; and identifying ways in which they could be helpful to their ill sibling; all of these contributed to feeling positive about themselves. With regard to peers, Iles (1979) notes that knowing what it was like to live with cancer enabled some children to provide comfort to others who showed signs of the disease (e.g. hair loss).

In their exploratory comparative study of the prolonged consequences of a sibling's death (for pre-adolescents, adolescents and those over 18 years of age), Fanos and Nickerson (1991: 75-76) found that adolescents who had lost a sibling to a chronic illness (cystic fibrosis) were troubled not only by a sense of guilt - guilt over their handling of their sibling's illness and death, and "survival guilt" - but they also experienced a global sense of anxiety. "Feelings of vulnerability, bodily concerns, fear of intimacy (related to carrier issues), excessive concern for others, somatic complaints and sleeping difficulties" (1991: 70) were also reported.

An important finding in this study is that there was no significant relationship between the surviving sibling's adaptation and the number of siblings lost, birth order and gender, family size, or time elapsed since the death of the sibling. Only the *age* of the surviving sibling at the time of the death was significant. The authors found that those between 13 and 17 years of age at the time of the loss showed more anxiety, depression and guilt than did either the 9-12 year-old (i.e. latency or preadolescent) group or those who were over 18 years of age. Fanos and Nickerson (1991: 79-80) provide three possible explanations for this discrepancy between the groups:

- (a) Differing developmental tasks. The need to disengage from parents increases during adolescence so siblings are more likely to be caught between their own developmental needs and concern for their parents.
- (b) Higher cognitive abilities enable adolescents to understand the significance of death and to question their religious upbringing. The sense of being different also elicited more anger at having had an experience that their peers had not gone through.
- (c) More complex relationships with siblings as they were just beginning to work through competitive phases and to form better relationships with their siblings.

The authors conclude that some problems may arise from the impact of the death itself, i.e. the *direct* effect through the sibling's own understanding of the nature of the death, which would depend on the developmental level and capacity to interpret its cause and to mourn the loss. Other problems may arise from the *indirect* effects (what Hindmarch, 1995, referred to as "secondary losses"), in that the capacity of the parents to mourn effectively may influence their ability to provide a nurturant environment for survivor siblings. Problem areas may also arise from the stress of having to deal with a chronic illness and the reorganisation that takes place within a family as it struggles to cope with long years of the illness (Fanos & Nickerson, 1991: 71).

In a later comparative longitudinal study, Fanos' (1996) findings concurred with those of Fanos and Nickerson (1991) but three additional and significant factors emerged:

- (i) Few of the siblings who were adolescent at the time of the loss married and many of them received therapy.
- (ii) Although surviving siblings expressed varying degrees of actual involvement while growing up with their sibling, the deceased sibling was generally of great importance to the survivor.
- (iii) For some individuals, the sibling bond seemed to have been altered in subtle ways by the illness experience itself - some established a stronger bond than had previously existed, while others experienced a greater distance (Fanos, 1996: 160).

Significant in this study is that the death of a sibling due to a chronic illness can have long-lasting implications for psychological wellbeing and for the establishment of intimate relationships of survivors; the latter is related to a fear of carrier issues. Also of significance is the finding that even though the siblings may not have been particularly close as they were growing up, the deceased sibling was still important to the survivors.

- **The Effect of Time**

Several researchers have explored the differences in children's and adolescents' responses, more specifically in terms of the time elapsed since the death. For many years, there was a perception, possibly based on Lindemann's (1944) work on bereavement, that grief is a time-limited process and that one or two years after the death, the person should be back to "normal." However, research into the long-term effects of sibling bereavement reveals a very different picture.

- **Persistent or Enduring Grief**

Birenbaum *et al.* (1989-1990) investigated the behavioural adjustment of 61 children, aged 4-16 years, during the terminal illness and 2 weeks, 4 months, and one year following a sibling's death from cancer. The authors found that survivors revealed behaviours typical of withdrawn and depressed children and similar to behaviours described in other bereaved children: anxiety, somatic complaints, depression, social withdrawal, immaturity, uncommunicativeness and obsessive compulsion. Like Binger (1973), the authors found that children exhibited these behaviours not only following the death, but also during the dying process.

The findings that children displayed a high frequency of behavioural problems at all four points in time and that a significant portion of these responses were severe enough that children were labelled "referable", led Birenbaum *et al.* (1989-1990) to suggest that early intervention is warranted (i.e. that the sibling receive support prior to the death of a brother or sister from cancer). Although this

suggestion is a sound one, a limitation of the study is that the time elapsed since the death was only one year. Other researchers have shown that changes in grief responses become apparent only after 18 months to 3 years post-death (Hogan, 1988). Demi and Miles (1987) suggest that some responses may still be considered as “grief within normal parameters” up to 5 years following the death, and McClowry *et al.* (1995) found that many parents and siblings were still expressing pain and experiencing the “empty space” phenomenon 7-9 years after the death of a child/sibling from childhood cancer.

In his study of the effects of sibling death on 33 adolescents (aged 14-19 years), divided between younger (14-16) and older groups (17-19), Balk (1983a: 15) reported that the most common emotional responses immediately after the loss were shock, confusion, depression, anger, numbness, fear and guilt. Sleeping and eating habits were also disturbed. Frequency of thoughts about the dead sibling, increased grief during holidays such as Christmas and Easter, and on anniversary of death, birth (i.e. anniversary reactions), thoughts of suicide, “hallucinations” (i.e. some teenagers experienced moments when they thought they had seen or heard their deceased sibling), and negative effects on study habits were also reported. Balk (1983a) notes that many of the adolescents’ grief symptoms were similar to those reported as typical of bereaved adults (Lindemann, 1944; Parkes, 1972/1975).

By grouping responses into two time frames, i.e. before or a few weeks after the death and “at the time of the interview”, Balk (1983b) found significant differences in reactions and perceptions, with grief reactions diminishing in intensity over time. However, the author notes that this did not mean that the death had no enduring influence on the siblings’ lives, nor that some were not still struggling with the impact of the loss on them. Although moments of acute grief seemed to be transitory and became less acute, the respondents’ grief had a lingering quality. One quarter to one half of the participants in this study reported what Balk (1983b: 152) describes as “enduring grief reactions” and many adolescents recalled their sibling’s death with a lot of pain two or more years after the loss.

Davies (1991a) reports similar findings in her study of adolescent sibling bereavement. She notes that the more immediate emotional responses, i.e. feelings of shock, numbness, sadness, loneliness, anger and depression, diminished in intensity over time but that most of the participants continued to experience some of these feelings, though much less intensely than during the first several years. However, what is significant is that Davies (1999: 105) notes that her earlier study revealed a negative correlation between “internalising” behaviour and time elapsed since the death, i.e. over time (up to three years post death) siblings became more withdrawn, anxious and sad. She stresses that although the acute manifestations of grief may subside, sibling grief is a form of “persistent grief” (Davies, 1999: 211).

Hogan's study (1988) of 40 bereaved siblings between the ages of 13-18 years also identified symptoms and reactions that are associated with different time frames following the loss of a sibling. Analysis on the HSIB (Hogan Sibling Inventory of Bereavement) revealed no changes between the first twelve months and the second twelve months, but there were significant differences when data were analysed during the first 18 months and the second 18 month period. Hogan (1988) concludes that researchers need to question the commonly held belief that one year is a reliable marker for measuring "resolution" of bereavement and posits that in order to help bereaved adolescents, it is necessary to understand what they are experiencing and the *considerable time* that it takes for these symptoms to begin to subside. Thus, as noted by Davies (1999: 105), the data related to the effect of time on sibling bereavement responses suggest two contradictions to general assumptions about sibling loss. Firstly, the time required for the bereavement process in siblings is indeed longer than a year or two, and even many years after the death, siblings are still experiencing pain and loss. Secondly, rather than describing a process of "letting go", the siblings and their parents detailed the continuing presence of an "empty space" (McClowry *et al.*, 1995).

- **Ongoing attachment**

Closely associated with the above is the theme of ongoing attachment, which has also been explored in the literature. In a study that included 157 bereaved adolescents (13-18 years of age), Hogan and DeSantis (1992: 171) note that adolescent sibling bereavement is a process that is not time-bound and that bereaved siblings experience a persistent, ongoing attachment to their deceased siblings. Using a focused question, "If you could ask or tell your dead sibling something, what would it be?", the authors found that the adolescent sibling bereavement process encompasses past, present and future dimensions, which become intermeshed as the grief process evolves (1992: 172). The study is significant in that it illustrates "the timelessness of adolescent sibling bereavement and the infiniteness of the sibling bond" (1992: 159). The past is inherent in the categories of "Regretting" and "Endeavouring to Understand" and is present in various regrets that siblings have about the relationship and in their effort to understand the circumstances of the death (1992: 172). The dimension of the present is most evident in the categories "Catching Up", "Reaffirming" and "Influencing" and is manifested by the survivor's "ongoing conversation with the deceased siblings about current events and a quest to find out how things are with them" (1992: 172-173), in the request that a deceased sibling "watch over and guide them" (1992: 173), and in vows never to forget the deceased sibling. The future dimension is encompassed in the category "Reuniting" and is apparent in "expressed anticipation of meeting the deceased sibling in heaven" (1992: 173).

Pervasive throughout the categories and across all the dimensions of time is the theme of "*ongoing attachment*" (Hogan & DeSantis: 1992: 173-74). The authors assert that it is this continuous emotional attachment that maintains the "ongoing presence" of the deceased brother or sister in the life of the bereaved sibling. They argue that these phenomena, that is, of "ongoing presence" and

“timelessness”, challenge medical science conceptualisations that grief is time-bound and that healthy recovery depends on the severance of emotional bonds with the deceased. In concluding, Hogan and DeSantis (1992: 174) aver that “... bereaved adolescents experience a sense of conceptual, emotional, and social eternity with their deceased siblings in the face of their physical absence”. This study highlights the significance of the loss of a sibling.

- **Personal Growth and Developmental Interference**

Several positive outcomes have also been documented in the literature, particularly as they relate to the loss of a sibling during adolescence. As noted by Fanos (1996: 126), “[t]ragedy has the capacity to promote growth as well as to interfere with development.” In general, the data on psychological and behavioural reactions to sibling loss suggest that while feelings of sadness, guilt, anxiety and fear often predominate in the shorter term, long-term reactions include psychological growth. Several researchers (Iles, 1979; Balk, 1983a, 1983b; Davies, 1991a; Hogan & DeSantis, 1994, 1996; Mahon & Page, 1995; Fanos, 1996) note that adolescent sibling survivors frequently speak of psychological growth as a result of their personal encounter with death and loss.

In their study of 35 surviving siblings from 12 families, Mahon and Page (1995) found that the self-concept of bereaved children is sometimes higher than that of a comparison group. Some of this was evidenced in the increased appreciation of the sibling relationship and some of it arose from increased family responsibility (see also Iles, 1979). From their data, Mahon and Page (1995:23) conclude that this maturity results from bereavement and can be distinguished from the developing maturity that comes with age.

Fanos (1996: 126) also reports that some siblings considered an increased appreciation of life as a present strength. Others found it beneficial to be forced to adopt an early independence because parents were not around - although the author recognises that this trait had both adaptive qualities and what appeared at times to be “rather sadly defensive” (1996: 127) qualities. Still others believed that living with a physically ill sibling made them more compassionate towards others. Robinson and Mahon (1997) summarise these positive outcomes as changes in maturity, self-concept and self-image.

Growth as a consequence of sibling loss has been described in other studies as well (Davies, 1991a; Balk, 1983a; Hogan and DeSantis, 1994). Davies’ (1991a: 90) study of 12 adults who lost a sibling in early adolescence, revealed that the adolescents’ encounter with death expanded their view of life and made them face death and their own mortality at a young age. Having experienced death, surviving siblings developed a more sensitive outlook on life, which they would not otherwise have gained, and enabled them to help others who were experiencing the death of a loved one. This, in turn, contributed

to “feeling good about themselves” (1991a: 90). Siblings’ reports of these positive outcomes indicated that the loss experience had provided an impetus for psychological growth.

However, while perceptions of psychological growth are common in many bereaved siblings, their altered view of the world left them feeling that they are different from their peers (Davies, 1991a: 92). To these adolescents, their friends’ interests and behaviours seemed “trivial” (1991a: 90) and some siblings withdrew from their peers, preferring to be alone. Long-term effects of sadness and depression were reported by 3 participants who had withdrawn from their peers following the death. Even though the other 9 siblings also reported feeling “different”, they had at least one friend with whom they shared many day-to-day experiences. Of significance in this regard is that even these 9 siblings seldom shared their thoughts and feelings about their sibling’s death with others (1991a: 91).

Davies (1991a) concludes that the sadness and withdrawal of these siblings were compounded by a sense of isolation. Instead of turning to peers for support and understanding, they withdrew and removed themselves from the natural experiences of growing up with peers. The author found that in the long term, these were the adolescents who “suffered harmful outcomes of sibling bereavement” (1991a: 93). Why some adolescents withdrew from their peers, whereas others did not, remains unclear. Davies (1991a: 93) mentions two possibilities: (1) that adolescents used coping behaviours similar to those used in previous stressful situations, and (2) that withdrawal may also be influenced by several aspects of individual personality with self-concept cited as a critical variable.

From her results, Davies (1991a) concludes that the experience of sibling bereavement in adolescence undoubtedly has an effect on adolescent development. However, she recognises that it is not the withdrawal itself, but rather the interaction of several factors that account for negative long-term outcomes. In particular, Davies (1991a: 85) attests that the long-term bereavement outcomes in siblings are in large part due to the relationships that they have with others, including the closeness of the pre-death sibling relationship, the cohesiveness of the family environment and the family’s social involvement.

Balk (1983a, 1983b) also focused on personal maturity and self-concept perceptions following the loss of a sibling during adolescence. Using a focused interview to gather data specifically on perceptions of *personal maturity, lessons learned from the death and the importance of religious beliefs*, the author found that perceptions of personal maturity as well as the importance of religion, before the sibling’s death and at the time of the interview, differed significantly. Evidence of increased maturity cited by Balk (1983a: 17) includes: improved schoolwork after temporary difficulties; and better relations with parents and peers. However, in contrast to the findings of Davies (1991a) and Mahon and Page (1995), Balk found that adjustments on most dimensions of self-concept

were the *same as*, rather than better than, the self-concept of non-bereaved teenagers. Nevertheless, in the area of *moral values* there seemed to be better adjustment than achieved by “normal” teenagers. These differences were apparent during the second year of bereavement. There was an increasing sense of contrast with the selves they remembered before their sibling’s death, and their more reflective, serious demeanour was a contrast attributed to time elapsed since the death rather than to age.

In Balk’s study (1983a), surviving siblings attributed feelings of *increased maturity* to having coped with their sibling’s death. Some also considered self-reflection or role changes (e.g. becoming the eldest child) to have contributed to their increased maturity. They felt that the most important *lessons learned from the death* were that there are ways to cope with adversity, and that bad things happen in life and people should be valued more while they are alive (1983a: 17).

In the study undertaken by Mahon and Page (1995), most children perceived themselves as *changed* by the experience of their sibling’s death and the bereavement process. Although these children felt “different” because of the death and some felt separate from their peers, many described a *change* in friendships. While some friends were lost, new and “better” friendships were formed and they came to know who their “real friends” were. This reflected greater maturity and resilience.

Hogan and DeSantis (1994, 1996) also recognised the opportunities for personal growth and the development of greater resilience following the loss of a sibling during adolescence. At the root of this shift from vulnerable to resilient survivor is the recognition of the irreversibility of the loss and the realisation that they need to regain control of their lives (1996: 190). This growing sense of personal control arises within the context of having to define “who they are now”, i.e. in a world without the physical presence of their deceased brother or sister (1996: 191). In their theory of adolescent sibling bereavement, the authors (1996: 189-190) describe “Personal Growth” as one of the main constructs, the others being the “Grief Construct” and the “Construct of Ongoing Attachment.” Changes are described in the following five categories that constitute the “Personal Growth” construct: a permanently changed reality; increased sense of others; increased resilience; increased faith; and an ability to receive and to give help.

- **Enhanced Spiritual Awareness**

The relationship between grief and enhanced spiritual awareness has been discussed in the general grief literature. Several studies have touched on this theme as it relates to the experience of losing a sibling during adolescence (Balk, 1983a, 1983b, 1991; Hogan & DeSantis, 1996). However, apart from Balk, few sibling bereavement studies have dealt with this aspect in any depth. Fanos and Nickerson (1991: 80) note that the adolescent group of bereaved siblings questioned their religious

upbringing which “generally fell by the wayside.” In another study of 40 bereaved adolescents, Hogan (1988) found that, following the death of a sibling, there was a shift in assignment of blame from themselves to God during the two time periods (3-18 months and 18-36 months). Although Balk (1983a: 17) found that *religion* assumed greater importance for the teenagers in his study, and had been turned to as one source of meaning since the sibling's death, in a later article (1991: 13) he points out that this turn to religion “occurred only after considerable questioning of, and anger at, God.” This is not an uncommon reaction to the loss of any loved one as demonstrated by C. S. Lewis (1976). Balk (1991: 14) also notes that, while current evidence indicates that specific bereavement reactions differentiate religious from non-religious adolescents (youths with strong religious beliefs report more confusion after the death, whereas other adolescents report more depression and fear), religious belief does not necessarily make coping with a sibling's death any easier.

In a more recent study, Batten and Oltjenbruns (1999: 529), using grounded theory, explored the relationship between adolescent sibling grief and enhanced spirituality, defined as “the human quest to understand life's meaning.” Quotes drawn directly from interviews with four adolescents following the death of a sibling illustrate these young persons' change in world perspective following their sibling's death. The authors describe 5 major themes that emerged from the interviews (1999: 538-540): a new perspective of self (“more mature”; “more open”); of others (an increased value of others); of the sibling relationship (the sense of ongoing attachment and continuation); of God/Higher power (new ways of thinking and interacting with a Higher power); and of life and death (developed a new perspective of death and in the process were forced to consider its impact on what life means). In broad terms the authors demonstrate how developmental changes in cognitive capacity during adolescence make it possible to challenge one's beliefs and search for meaning. They conclude that the crisis of experiencing the death of a sibling during this period can serve as a catalyst for enhanced spirituality.

It is clear from the foregoing literature that the loss of a sibling in childhood and adolescence is indeed a significant loss. While adult sibling loss is considered a more “normative” loss than the loss of a very young person, the experience of losing a sibling in adulthood may be a difficult one to come to terms with. The following section will deal with sibling loss in adulthood.

4.2.1.2 Sibling Losses in Adulthood

Most of the research on sibling loss ends with adolescence with little attention given to adult sibling bereavement. Yet an exploratory, hermeneutic study by Cicirelli (1995: 87-105) of relationships between adult siblings in one large family, reveals that brothers and sisters maintain vital connections in adulthood. The author notes that, despite a special closeness among certain siblings, a degree of conflict and tension between certain siblings and parents, and conflict between certain siblings and

certain spouses, all the siblings in the study seemed ready “to close ranks, to give help in the event of a crisis or outside threat, as well as to co-operate on family tasks and projects” (1995: 105).

Although bereaved siblings are generally referred to as “forgotten” and “invisible” mourners, perhaps the most neglected in the bereavement literature and possibly also in clinical, social and therapeutic situations, is the sibling who loses a brother or sister in adulthood. With few exceptions (Moss & Moss, 1986; Robinson & Mahon, 1997; Robinson & Pickett, 1996; Pape, 1999, 2002; Rodger & Tooth, 2004; Eaves *et al.*, 2005), adult sibling loss has been ignored.

Some writers provide testimony to the depth of the grief experienced by adult siblings, whose loss is frequently unacknowledged and overlooked. Gorer (1965/1987), who lost his younger brother, Peter, when he himself was 51 years old, wrote poignantly about the impact of this loss. He emphasised that his grief was profound and intense and also described the failure of friends and society in general to understand the depth of his loss or his need to mourn (1965/1987:14). Engel (1975) also described the emotional and physical turmoil that he experienced following the death of his identical twin at the age of 49 years.

In their concept analysis of sibling loss, Robinson and Mahon (1997) outlined three characteristics of adult sibling bereavement: (a) a multi-dimensional bereavement reaction consisting of grief with physical, psychological, and/or behavioural components; (b) a change in self-perception; and (c) a change in world-view, including one’s roles and responsibilities. To a large extent these characteristics align with the themes of Moss and Moss (1986) who ground their findings in the sibling bond. The authors (1986: 399-402) examined 6 interwoven qualitative characteristics of the childhood sibling bond: affective ties, rivalry, family solidarity, assistance, companionship, and socialisation. They argue that although the meanings may be manifested differently in adulthood as the family and social contexts change and the focus shifts to new nuclear families, these characteristics persist for life. For each, some early childhood patterns may persist, and other new behaviours and patterns may develop (1986: 403).

In exploring the loss of a sibling in adulthood, the authors describe three pervasive interrelated themes that underlie adult sibling loss: (a) personal vulnerability towards death; (b) impact on the sense of self; and (c) threat to family unity. These themes will be used to highlight certain aspects of sibling loss in adulthood.

- **Personal Vulnerability Toward Death**

When an adult sibling dies, the survivor may experience a heightened sense of “*personal vulnerability toward death*” (Moss & Moss, 1986: 408) particularly if the sibling dies unexpectedly or

“off-time”. This insight aligns with the findings of Pape (1999), which refer to increased vulnerability following the loss of a sibling and a heightened awareness of finitude that challenges survivors to face existential realities. Because the sibling came from the same family and was in the same generation, the loss may affect the survivor’s perception of how long he or she expects to live (Moss & Moss, 1986: 409). The authors note that the sense of finitude triggers the question: “Am I next to die?” but it can also lead to a more positive acceptance of death. The fear that he or she may die at the same age or from the same cause as the sibling may manifest in somatic (identificatory) symptoms as demonstrated by Engel (1975) following the loss of his twin brother. A higher increase in “personal death awareness” has also been noted in the event of childhood sibling loss (Worden, 1996: 117) and by those who experience the loss of a friend (Oltjenbruns, 1996). As noted by Worden (1996) our own mortality becomes more figural when we are confronted by the death of a contemporary, of a peer.

Moss and Moss (1986) elaborate on what they refer to as “off-time” life events, particularly as these relate to sibling loss in adulthood. The authors describe “off-time” life events as events that occur earlier than the normal expected time, and which may be particularly traumatic because they upset the natural “rhythm of the life cycle...” (1986: 409). Survivor siblings may experience the death of a brother or sister as “off-time” in various ways: (a) if the sibling that died is younger than the surviving sibling; (b) if the sibling dies before the parents; (c) if the sibling dies at a younger age than the parents died; (d) if the death occurs at an age younger than the survivor expects to die; (e) and if there are “unfinished developmental tasks” (1986: 410). Moss and Moss conclude that “it may be that all sibling deaths, except those of the very old, are perceived as being off-time, since our own generation – one’s self - is not yet ready to die” (1986: 410).

- **Impact on the Sense of Self**

The loss of a sibling in adulthood may also shake the *sense of self* and lead to feelings of emptiness, helplessness and hopelessness (Moss & Moss, 1986: 410). For some adults, the deceased brother or sister may have been a person central to his or her sense of identity and an important source of emotional support and assistance (1986: 410). Social comparison with the sibling, and the lifelong process of identification and differentiation, of separation and individuation, ends. The identity crisis accompanying sibling loss is most forcefully demonstrated in Engel’s (1975) description of the impact of the death of his twin. A lifelong companion with whom to share activities, interests and reminiscences, is lost (Moss & Moss, 1986: 411). Mutual support, caretaking opportunities, and companionship, reactivated in later adulthood when the “empty nest, widowhood, and joint parent care” become significant, are also lost (1986: 405). The search for meaning in the sibling’s death may lead to understanding or evoke “questions of guilt or retribution” (1986: 411) - for not having done enough for the deceased, not been closer or kinder to him or her. The strongest feeling, according to

Moss and Moss (1986: 411) may be “survivor guilt”, which may persist and intensify. Relief may also be experienced and this too may evoke guilt (1986: 412).

- **Threat to Family Unity**

Moss and Moss (1986: 412) contend that, as in the case of childhood sibling loss, the loss of a brother or sister in adulthood may also threaten the unity of the family, as “habitual patterns of interaction” cease. Survivors must often renegotiate relationships with parents, with other surviving siblings and with the family of the deceased (1986: 413). They must decide whether or not to “carry on the values and expectations of the deceased” (1986: 412). They must acknowledge that the family will never be the same family again; “an existential incompleteness will persist” (1986: 412). If parents are deceased, sibling loss reactivates the grief of parental loss (as also revealed by Engel, 1975). If parents are alive, their grief complicates that of the surviving sibling. Parental comparisons of the survivor with the deceased and idealisation of the lost sibling may trigger old rivalries, weaken the bond with the parent and leave the surviving sibling feeling as the “less preferred child” (Moss & Moss, 1986: 413). In addition, survivor siblings may become a unifying force in the lives of the bereaved nuclear family of the deceased. In the process their own deep grief may be disregarded as the sympathy of friends, acquaintances, and extended family is directed towards the spouse and children of the deceased (1986: 413).

In one of the few available studies examining sibling death in early and middle adulthood, Demi and Howell (1991, in Cicirelli, 1995: 196) used grounded theory to discover common themes in views of 17 sibling survivors aged 26 to 50 years regarding the loss of their sibling to suicide. The authors found that the major themes of such a loss included: (a) the pain of losing the sibling; (b) hiding the painful feelings from others; and (c) efforts to resolve the loss and heal the pain. Cicirelli (1995: 196) notes that, as in childhood and adolescence, the suppression of painful feelings interfered with the grief work and the ultimate resolution of the loss.

Two more recent, unpublished studies by Pape (1999; 2002) also pertain directly to the loss of a sibling in early to middle adulthood. Following the heuristic process of Moustakas, 1990 (in Pape, 1999), Pape delineates several themes that emerged from her interviews of five participants (three men and two women) whose siblings’ deaths were unexpected (mostly due to accidents). A dominant theme, and one which concurs with the findings of Moss and Moss (1986), is the surviving sibling’s heightened sensitivity to finitude and a re-evaluation of priorities in life. Pape (1999: 4) notes that the irrevocable finality of their sibling’s death brought a new realisation of mortality and fuelled personal changes, shifts in relationships, and “an entering into the world in a more authentic way.” At some point all the participants experienced profound sadness, anger and confusion and went through a period that felt like a decreased functioning in the world. Surviving siblings also experienced the need

for a “safe place” in order to facilitate healing and nurture change (1999: 5). There were changes in the participants’ relationships with others that were often inspired by a sense of limited time. Bereaved siblings also experienced an increased sensitivity and compassion for the suffering of others (1999: 6).

For all the bereaved siblings, there was a point at which they realised that their lives were separate from their siblings’ lives (Pape, 1999: 6). The realisation that their lives were ultimately distinct and separate, no matter how deeply connected they might be to another person, generated a sense of loneliness and separateness, yet all the participants still chose to “deepen their relationships with others” (1999: 6). With the sense of separateness and loss, many of those interviewed described a desire to integrate some of their sibling’s characteristics and take on some of the roles that their sibling had played in their lives (1999: 7). Finally, although all participants had reached some resolution of their loss, this was “usually stated in a way that recognised the depth of personal transformation experienced, but that also respected the cost of that change” (1999: 7). The author concludes that what emerged from the participants’ stories was a strong sense of how “externally quiet” but “internally disruptive” sibling loss in adulthood can be. She suggests that clinicians need to be prepared for this if they are “to help surviving siblings survive and make sense of their loss” (Pape, 1999: 8).

Expanding on this earlier study, Pape’s second paper (2002) focuses more specifically on the process of redefining the self, following the loss of a sibling in adulthood. Pape points out that the redefinition of one’s place and meaning in the world involves not only synthesising a new relationship with the deceased sibling but also redefining and understanding who one is as a surviving member of the family and as someone still confronting the challenges and difficulties of life (2002: 4). Critical to this is the actual “living in” and experiencing of the loss, remaining “internally active” and recalling memories and stories of their sibling’s life (2002: 2).

A significant additional theme that was touched on but not elaborated, is that while each of the siblings interviewed was keenly aware of the pain that his or her parents endured with the death of their adult child, none of the surviving siblings felt that “their grief experience was in any way impeded by the extent of their parents’ grief reaction” (2002: 6). Pape provides as possible explanation for this the fact that as adults these siblings may have had other support systems (friends, spouse) that held them during their grief so that their parents would not need to do so. However, Pape points out that all the participants felt a lack of their parents’ “presence and care” (2002: 6).

4.2.2 Familial Aspects of Sibling Loss

A sibling tie is a family tie whether the surviving sibling is a child, an adolescent or an adult. The familial aspects of sibling loss refer to how the surviving sibling experiences the loss of a brother or sister within the context of the family. Thus, apart from the emotional closeness (Davies, 1988; 1991b; Mc Clowry *et al.*, 1995) between the siblings prior to the loss and the developmental level of the bereaved sibling (childhood, adolescence or adulthood), several researchers have also found that the manner in which families manage the pain of loss (Cain *et al.*, 1964; Krell & Rabkin, 1979), the process of family adaptation to the loss (Gelcer, 1986; Gilbert, 1996), and the “degree of cohesiveness in the family” (Davies, 1991b: 130), also influence the outcome of sibling loss. Indeed, Bradach and Jordan (1995) argue that it may not simply be the death itself as much as the damage done to the family that ultimately determines the longer-term effects on siblings.

It is generally accepted that the loss of a child, at whatever age, is among life’s most devastating experiences (Raphael, 1984; Rando, 1991). One of the moments of the complexity of sibling loss is that survivors not only have to cope with their own grief but that they are also faced with parents who are mourning the loss of their child. This truth is recognised by several researchers (Cain *et al.*, 1964; Binger, 1973; Krell & Rabkin, 1979; Rosen, 1986; Fanos, 1996; Davies, 1999), who also note that the child’s reactions to the loss of a sibling are not merely intrapsychic but that these are inevitably interrelated with the family dynamics. Rosen (1986: 5) asserts that the death of a child “can significantly disrupt the structure and organisation of the family, and that parental grief and mourning can hinder surviving siblings in their efforts to adapt.”

4.2.2.1 Parental Grief

Cain *et al.*, (1964) found that parents often distrusted and sometimes blamed doctors or hospitals following the death of their child. Thus the surviving sibling’s heightened fear of doctors and hospitals was not “an isolated one” (1964: 746). Similarly, the survivor’s fears of death, prominent in almost all of the children’s responses, were not purely the product of “talion fantasies and identification with the dead sibling” (1964: 747). Cain *et al.* observed that parents sometimes dealt with their grief by treating the remaining child(ren) as a substitute or by comparing the survivor to the deceased. The authors note that the changes in sibling relations and parent-child relations wrought by the loss of a child, as well as the profound and prolonged parental mourning and protracted mother absences during the illness of the sibling prior to death, essentially leave healthy siblings without support (1964: 749).

The parents’ responses to the death of a child, e.g. overprotectiveness of the remaining children by one or both parents, and the consequent insecurity and exacerbation of fears of death in children, have also been well described by others including Krell and Rabkin (1979). In their article, Krell and

Rabkin (1979:471) posit that “the loss of a child leaves a legacy that affects all future interactions among the surviving family members.” The authors note that the parents’ difficulties in coping with the loss of their child may be foreshadowed by previous losses, and that these families “live in the shadow of potential child death” (1979: 471). This compounds the experience of bereavement and affects the parents, the remaining children, and even those not yet born. Significantly, Cain *et al.* (1964) found that children who were born subsequent to the death of a sibling manifested similar problems to those who had known their sibling and, for this reason, these individuals were also included in their study. On a more extreme level, case studies of children of Nazi holocaust survivors (Phillips, 1978; Niederland, 1981; Rubin, 1996) also illustrate the powerful legacy of multiple losses in a family. In such instances, surviving siblings in effect become survivors of “survivors” and a child may even “be expected to take the place of all other lost relatives” (Rakoff, 1966, in Phillips, 1978:371). The implication is that the loss of a child leaves shadows that, to use Davies' (1999: 211) words, become “contextual variables for the next generation.”

Krell and Rabkin (1979: 472) view parental reactions to the loss of a child as “family protective maneuvers” and the child’s roles are discussed as “forms of survivorhood that parallel the family protective maneuvers.” When a child dies, the survivors, both parents and children, must adapt to a new reality and “a complex family process begins, far more complicated than the sum of the individual responses of the survivors” (1979: 471). Especially prominent are the feelings connected with responsibility for the tragedy and the guilt to which parent and child survivors are susceptible (1979: 472).

The experience of losing a brother or sister is affected by the way in which the parent relates to the surviving child following the loss of a child/sibling. Krell and Rabkin (1979: 474) identified three types of survivor-children that reflect the consequences of parents' attempts “to handle the grief of loss, the guilt of survivorhood, and the vicissitudes of fate.” They identify: (a) The “haunted child”, where parents emphasise silence and focus on guilt. This leaves the surviving sibling feeling distrustful and fearful because of the silence in the family surrounding the circumstances of the death; (b) The “bound child”, where the surviving child becomes “incomparably precious” and is overprotected as a result of the parents’ attempt to prevent “further catastrophe”; (c) The “resurrected child”, where substitution and replacement become major themes, and the survivor is destined to live his/her own life as well as that of the lost sibling (1979: 474-475).

Among the commonly used protective devices used by parents against the anguish of loss, Krell and Rabkin (1979) point out that there are those who are at greater risk for difficulties to emerge in surviving siblings:

- **The Conspiracy of Guilt : The “Haunted Child”**

When parents feel that death was preventable and that they are to blame, it becomes difficult to explain the situation to surviving siblings and conversation about the death is “shrouded, evasive, elliptic” (1979: 473). Parent(s) and child come to share “a powerful bond through the spoken or unspoken feeling that if any one of them had somehow acted differently the child might still be alive” (1979: 473). The guilt maintained by these unrealistic (and sometimes realistic) beliefs remains frozen, with each member of the family locked in a struggle with his/her own conscience and unable to share their painful feelings. The fear of each member is that open discussion about the loss may lead to his or her exposure as the blameworthy one and the “conspiracy of guilt” provides “a blanket of protection” for parent and child (1979: 473).

- **The Preciousness of the Survivor : The “Bound Child”**

Giving *special status* to a surviving child is another way in which parents react against the pain of loss and is manifested by parental overprotection. Being *special* is enhanced by the *expectations* for the child, involving his or her own potential as well as the “real or fantasied attributes of the missing sibling” (1979: 473). The living child becomes the precious embodiment of two children. Thus, the absent child remains in some sense alive, protecting the family from having to face the loss fully.

- **Substitution for the Lost Child: The “Resurrected Child”**

Following the death of a child, parents may try to create a replacement. Most commonly one of the surviving children is chosen to fill the role of the deceased (1979: 474). Some parents may decide to have another child or to adopt or foster a child in order to fill the void. A sibling born after the loss of a child may be at risk of becoming a replacement for the lost child; sometimes even carrying the same name as the deceased infant. The Dutch artist, Vincent Van Gogh, is an example of a child born after the loss of a brother and carrying the name of his deceased sibling, i.e. Vincent. According to Krell and Rabkin (1979: 475), replacement children are likely to be even more vulnerable as they are destined to live a “double life”. The authors note that these children’s chances of developing a secure sense of identity are undermined by the parents’ inconsistent responses to their two perceived personalities, “the real and the illusory” (1979: 475).

In a study of surviving siblings whose brothers or sisters died from cystic fibrosis, Fanos (1996: 74-79) also lists three common parental responses in the aftermath of the death of a child: idealisation, refocusing, and substitution. Idealisation refers to the parents’ attempts to remember their deceased child in a positive way and the tendency to idealise, idolise (almost canonise) the deceased child. This frequently leaves the survivor(s) feeling unable to live up to the frozen image of perfection of the deceased sibling (also noted by Cain *et al.*, 1964). The other two parental responses (i.e. refocusing and substitution) are similar to those described by Krell and Rabkin (1979) and refer more to the ways

in which one or both parents relate to the surviving child, i.e. by overprotecting him or her (“the bound child”), and/or by trying to replace the lost child (“the resurrected child”).

In “refocusing”, parental attention is redirected towards the surviving sibling(s), and particularly to adolescents, because of fears that something bad might happen to yet another child (Fanos, 1996). For the survivor, separating from parents may then become difficult. This may be due partly to the sibling’s own sense of responsibility for parents, but sometimes it is due to the parents’ inability “to allow their adolescent children to grow up” (Fanos: 1996: 77). With “substitution” the parent may try to replace the lost child by substituting one of their other healthy children.

Very little research is available regarding the effect of parental grief on sibling loss in adulthood. However, Fanos (1996) points out that surviving siblings, 18 years and over, were more likely to experience a role reversal, becoming equally protective of their parents. These young adults struggled with wanting to live their own lives while being very concerned about their parents. Significantly, Fanos (1996: 78) also found that while surviving siblings who were adults at the time of the loss were more secure in their identity and were less likely to become substitutes for the lost child, many still struggled with pressure from parents to try to replace the lost individual.

In examining the direct and transgenerational effects of traumatic loss on current functioning in college students, Bradach and Jordan (1995: 315) found that subjects directly affected by traumatic deaths during their lifetimes reported more psychological distress, less individuation from parents, and poorer college adjustment than control subjects. According to the authors, an example of a family at increased risk would be one that had suffered a traumatic loss and subsequently was faced with a normal developmental loss, such as having a grown child leave home (1995: 317). They argue that reverberations from a previous traumatic death in the family may hinder members as they negotiate future losses and separations, including normal developmental transitions, such as leaving home (1995: 318).

4.2.2.2 Communication within the family

The need to express feelings of loss has long been recognised (Freud, 1917; Deutsch, 1937; Klein, 1940; Lindemann, 1944; Bowlby, 1979, 1980). Yet research indicates that, within the family, silence frequently surrounds death and loss in childhood and adolescence. The absence of open communication of feelings within the family regarding the loss is seen to contribute heavily to long-term negative outcomes of sibling loss (Cicirelli, 1995: 199).

Some researchers (Cain *et al.*, 1964; Davies, 1999; Mahon & Page, 1995) describe a conscious attempt by surviving siblings to keep their feelings and other responses secret in an effort to protect

their parents. Others have noted that siblings seldom shared their feelings with family members (Balk, 1983a; Davies, 1991a; Rosen, 1984-85). A “*startling*” finding by Balk (1983a: 17), is that although all respondents said that they spoke to at least one family member about personal matters before the death, less than half were able to talk to any family member about personal matters after the death. By the time of the interview, most of the teenagers said that they had begun talking about school concerns, friends and college plans but only three of the participants said that they discussed their feelings about the death. This resonates with Rosen’s study (1984-85) in which she emphasises the silence in families surrounding the death of a child/sibling. Rosen (1984-85) first refers to this reaction as “prohibited mourning” and later refers to it as “unspoken grief” (1986). This seems to be a major feature of the grief of childhood and adolescent survivor siblings.

Rosen’s study (1984-1985) of 159 late adolescents and adults who had lost a sibling in childhood or adolescence (i.e. before the age of 20 years), constitutes one of the few early attempts to explore individual, familial and societal responses to the loss of a sibling. A major aim of the study was to explore the extent to which a child is able to grieve the loss of a sibling and “the extent to which the family and the surrounding social supports are able to assist in that process” (Rosen, 1984-1985: 312). With regard to the interaction with parents, Rosen found that about one third of the *respondents* felt that they had to comfort one or both parents; moreover, approximately a third reported a sense of responsibility to compensate for their parents’ loss. Striking in her study was the degree to which respondents failed to share their feelings with others at the time of the loss and for a long time afterwards. Failure to express feelings did not appear to be related to the respondent’s age at the time of the loss, his or her sibling’s age, social class, family size, or birth order position. Equally striking was the unexpected degree to which the *parents* failed to talk about the death of the child (1984-1985: 313-314). This too was not influenced by the age of the sibling who died, cause of death, family size, age of parents, or social class. In both instances, i.e. the bereaved siblings’ failure to express feelings and the parents’ failure to talk about the loss, the data suggested that religion might have been a factor with children coming from Catholic families representing half of those who did share feelings (1984-1985: 314).

As a result of the lack of communication the surviving “sibling’s sense of isolation and responsibility, as well as a clearly felt message that the sibling had not experienced a significant loss”, was enhanced (Rosen, 1984-1985: 314). Rosen’s findings suggest that when a child suffers the death of a sibling, he or she will most likely experience one or more “prohibitions” to acknowledging and working through the loss. Prohibitions can occur at the *intrapsychic level* by denial of the death and the painful emotions that this evokes; at the *family level* by a lack of communication with the child; and at the *social level* by injunctions to “be strong” as well as by avoiding conversation about the death, which

conveys to a surviving sibling even further to suppress feelings associated with the loss (1984-1985: 315).

Rosen (1984-85) concludes that children who lose a sibling in childhood or adolescence are at a high risk of failing to grieve the loss. Siblings take on a parent-protecting role, which might be “externally imposed (‘take care of your parents’) or self-imposed” (see also Robinson & Mahon, 1997: 482).

When a parent-protective posture is chosen by the surviving sibling and when this is also accompanied by social withdrawal (Davies, 1988, 1991), opportunities to express feelings and/or to receive support from others are limited even further. (Social responses will be discussed in greater detail under subsection 4.2.3: “Societal Aspects of Sibling Loss”).

In contrast to the above mentioned studies, the research of Hogan and DeSantis (1994), which aimed at identifying what bereaved adolescents perceived to have helped or hindered them in coping with the loss of their sibling, sixty-nine percent cited family members as being of assistance. Forty-seven percent reported that mothers and fathers provided comfort by helping them to accept the normality of their feelings and by sharing memories of the deceased sibling with them (1994: 137). Twenty-two percent said that relatives, other than parents, e.g. brother, sister, aunt, and grandparents, also provided support. The adolescents also felt that the stress of coping with the loss helped families to draw closer together.

Hogan and DeSantis (1994) note that the fact that a larger number of respondents found parents supportive rather than non-supportive is significant because of the prevailing view in the literature that deeply bereaved parents are emotionally unavailable to their grieving children (1994: 144).

Perhaps the fact that the subjects were accessed through Compassionate Friends, a support group for bereaved parents and children, may have a bearing on this finding. Nevertheless, it is significant that the adolescents were prepared to accept family support when it was available. Mahon and Page (1995) report similar results with most surviving siblings identifying mothers as being helpful, as were some fathers. Again, it would appear that when parental support is available, children are prepared to accept this support.

Because of the sparseness of research on adult sibling loss, there is insufficient evidence regarding this “prohibition” as it relates to adult sibling survivors. In one of the few studies examining sibling death, through suicide, in early and middle adulthood, Demi and Howell (1991, in Cicirelli, 1995) identified the tendency to hide painful feelings from others as one of the themes of adult sibling loss (discussed in section 4.2.1.2: “Sibling Losses in Adulthood”). As it has been well documented that death due to suicide is a particularly traumatic loss experience and that silence usually surrounds such a loss, it is possible that the suppression of feelings and failure to communicate about the loss may be

related more to the circumstances of the death and the stigma associated with suicide. However, Pape's (1999) description of the grief of adult sibling survivors whose siblings died mainly through accidents, as "externally quiet", and Gorer's (1965/1987) account of his own unacknowledged grief, would seem to suggest that the silence may extend to adult sibling survivors whose siblings died from a variety of causes. The meaning of the silence, however, may be qualitatively different.

4.2.2.3 The Family as a System

There are a number of authors (Gelcer, 1986; Gilbert, 1996; Nadeau, 1998) who, without studying a specific population, have written about the family as a system which is confronted by the loss of one of its members. These writers emphasise the importance of open communication about the death as relevant in the family's attempt to make sense of the loss.

Gelcer (1986) argues that any loss is experienced as a shock and that this cannot be "measured" solely in terms of individual responses or functional health impairment in individuals over a short period of time (1986: 315). The author presents the experience of loss within a family as part of an "*ongoing process of change* in a system" that involves "a whole personal and social frame of reference" (1986: 316). Like a "minor tremor in a major earthquake" (1986: 316), the immediate effects are felt by those who are close, but eventually it shakes the whole system of relationships. A "second order of change" (1986: 318) is brought about by the reactions of those who are immediately affected and this begins a cycle of change in others. According to Gelcer, stress may be experienced in reaction to this change rather than as a direct reaction to the loss itself. In order to understand the nature of the loss and its effect, researchers need to see it in the context of the whole social network and across time (1986: 316). She argues that attempting to slow down change, or to deny it by replacing the lost person, does not help anyone (1986: 319).

Gelcer (1986) notes that the reverberations within a family determine the nature of loss experienced and how it is dealt with. Based on a family systems analysis (1986: 328-329) of two therapy cases (both dealing with a child's loss of a parent), she stresses the significance of the network of relationships that connects individuals to each other and that defines a unique context for each individual. She notes that the death of one person creates a gap in this network that affects all relationships equally but with qualitatively different effects. Stress is experienced equally by all survivors as their relationships, with each other as well as with the deceased person, are tested. Each survivor has to re-evaluate his or her existence both individually and in relation to others. Gelcer (1986: 315) demonstrates how the particular patterns of the family prior to the loss and their larger socio-cultural context are essential in terms of how individuals cope with their loss. She concludes that the ability to acknowledge and deal with the loss can help to resolve pre-existing problems,

whereas, in the absence of mourning, not only are these problems intensified, but “new problems emerge that have to do with non-resolution of problems despite the passage of time” (1986: 329).

Gilbert (1996) takes a constructivistic/interpretivist view of grief within the interactive system of the family. She explores grief “from the inside out” (1996: 270), i.e. from the perspective of individual family members as they experience a loss in the context of their family. The author takes the view that grief is an active process of redefining one's own sense of reality. Families are seen as “arenas of grief”; they themselves do not grieve, only individuals grieve (1996: 273). This is done in a variety of contexts, one of which is the family. The author emphasises that in order truly to understand the nature of grief in families, it is necessary to recognise that individual and relational factors are operating simultaneously: “Grief within the family, then, consists of the interplay of individual family members grieving in the social and relational context of the family, with each member affecting and being affected by the others” (1996: 271).

Gilbert (1996: 274) focuses on one of the assumptions held by family members, namely that because they have lost the same individual, their grief should be the same. She points out, however, that the tendency of family members to be dealing with different issues at varied points in their grief process, is far more common than is “matched” grieving (1996: 275). Personal pain and differences in how each member grieves can, in effect, lead to some misunderstanding and deep resentments (Rosenblatt *et al.*, 1991; Nadeau, 1998).

Rosenblatt *et al.* (1991) in fact indicate that if two people experience a mutual loss, instead of being able to use their mutual experience to be supportive, they are the least likely to be able to help each other. Difficulties in shared mourning, cited by the authors, seem to stem from not meeting the needs and expectations of the other person (1991:123). Disagreements in shared bereavement cited by Rosenblatt *et al.* (1991) include: being pushed to express feelings; one person talking incessantly about certain things associated with the death; and disagreements about the character of the deceased. The authors note that the key to understanding disagreements in shared bereavement is that although they have lost the same person, they may not be grieving the *same relationship*; they may not have lost identical connections and may have different histories with the deceased. These differences may make it difficult to appreciate one another's needs, feelings and perceptions (1991: 123).

Gilbert (1996: 276) concludes that, within the family, each member's grief will have its own unique character, informed by the relationship with the deceased. In addition, the relationships individual grievers have with each other and any emotional legacies that they share from the past may contribute to differences among family members (Bowen, 1991, in Gilbert, 1996). Another complication cited by Gilbert, is that, over time, individual members may experience changes in their interpretation of the

loss. The degree to which family members are able to anticipate and prepare for the death is also a factor that can “put family members at different places” in their resolution of the loss especially if the family tendency is to protect each other from pain. Ambiguity about “who” or “what” has been lost in losing a family member can lead to internal and external conflicts, particularly if the individual is unable to confirm his or her reality with others in the family (1996: 276). Such ambiguous losses often lead to disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1987) and may result in grieving individuals feeling stigmatised and alienated within their own families - what Riches and Dawson (2000) refer to as “intimate loneliness”. Gilbert emphasises that conversation is crucial to the family’s attempt to make sense of its bereavement.

Shapiro (1994) integrates an interpersonal object relations perspective and developmental theory to generate a systemic developmental theory of adult bereavement. She stresses the relational aspects of individual grief within the family context and points out that in real-life grief experiences, parents and children grieve together (1994: 40). Shapiro focuses on the loss of a parent and the loss of a child and how this impacts on survivors within the family. She posits that the loss affects each individual uniquely, but the grief reaction of each individual will be shaped by the needs and reactions of the others. In this process of shared grief, the parents’ reaction often provides the cue for what the children will be able to express and integrate. However, bereaved children’s emotional reactions and their relationships to the grieving parents will also affect the parents’ bereavement experience (1994: 40).

Shapiro (1994: 42) views adult grief as part of a “family developmental crisis that disrupts adult and family stability in the interrelated domains of emotion, action and meaning.” According to Shapiro, adults need all the resources at their disposal - intrapsychic, family systemic, community and cultural - in their attempts to deal with the overwhelming emotions, in reorganising the activities of daily living and family interaction, and in restoring a stable sense of the “collaborative self which now includes the death and its meaning” (1994: 42).

The author argues that in the bereavement process the relationship to the deceased family member remains an important resource for the mourner (1994: 41). Drawing from the insights of the British object relations school and self psychology, she concurs that adults need enduring relationships in order “to sustain the basic psychological processes of emotional regulation and regulation of self esteem” (Shapiro, 1994: 41). From a systemic developmental perspective, a process of internalisation in early childhood establishes a secure inner image of close others and a sense of a resilient, autonomous self. These internalised images of loving attachment figures allow both children and adults to tolerate their loved ones’ ordinary comings and goings. When one of the vital members of the “collaboratively constructed self” dies, working models of the self with others have to be

reintegrated to accommodate realistically to the new characteristics of the relationship to the deceased. The relationship can only exist in memory and emotion, and the internal definition of self has to accommodate this new reality (1994: 41).

Shapiro (1994: 42) posits that changing family relationships following a loss require the “passage of time and a supportive environment in order to re-establish a new, coherent sense of the relational self.” Grieving parents who have lost a spouse or a child find themselves extremely stressed by the demands of ongoing parenting. The more stressful the real-life circumstances of the death and the scarcer the real-life supports, the more likely an adult will be to use “growth-constraining intrapsychic and interpersonal strategies as sources of support” (1994: 42). These strategies for stability may involve denial or disassociation (intrapsychic processes), or restricting family communication (interpersonal processes). While these defences help adults achieve stability in a state of crisis, they restrict full integration of the grief experience. This may become more apparent in subsequent stages of the family life cycle. Nevertheless, Shapiro notes that whatever an adult’s immediate response to the crisis of grief, “new stages of the family life cycle will provide new opportunities for growth and integration of previously fragmented aspects of the grief experience and for more inclusive reorganisation of the complex collaborative self” (1994: 43).

Based on her work with bereaved adults, Shapiro (1994: 41) avers that a systemic developmental perspective on adult bereavement suggests that, “the end point of successful grief work is not relinquishment of the lost relationship but the creation of a new bond, one that acknowledges the enduring psychological and spiritual reality of someone we have loved and made a part of ourselves.” Shapiro’s systemic developmental theory emphasises the relational aspects of a loss within a family but does not address the bereaved young adult sibling’s loss experience.

4.2.3 Societal Aspects of Sibling Loss

Societal aspects refer to the broader social world of the bereaved sibling and include relationships with peers, teachers and others. The sibling loss experience may be portrayed as an individual “journey” and/or as a private family affair, but siblings are also part of a larger social and cultural context of which the family is a part. In addition to the individual pain of loss, and the parents’ intense grief, the responses of “less significant others” (Rosen, 1984-85: 314) may also colour the sibling’s loss experience and influence the trajectory of his/her bereavement. Gelcer (1986:328) posits that the social class or community status and religious affiliation of the family may bring additional constraints on, or outlets for, the individual’s expression of grief.

Unfortunately, the interplay between individual and social group in our western culture is out of balance “not only in that one is generally left alone, or chooses to be alone, to suffer one’s pain and

move on, but also because cultural and social dicta have weakened” (Geler, 1986: 317). Thus, while traditional and religious communities may offer the support of “commonly held meaning structures that aid in making sense of the death”, modern and highly mobile societies may offer few, if any, “pre-existing meaning structures that can cope with bereavement” (Riches & Dawson, 2000: 24). A significant finding by Rosen (1984-85), although inconclusive, was that Catholic families more openly shared their grief than did families from certain other religious groups.

4.2.3.1 The Social Pathology of Death

Of the few studies available on the societal aspects of sibling loss, findings suggest that the broader social system fails bereaved siblings. A phenomenological study that is significant in this respect is that of Sennett (1987). In this study, Sennett explores social attitudes of western culture and how the emphasis on technology, the weakening of religious beliefs and the tendency to deny death, reinforce the bereaved person’s sense of loneliness and of being in a different world to others. Sennett (1987) obtained written descriptions from five bereaved individuals, ranging in age from 18 to 31 years, regarding their experience of a specific situation in which they felt that their bereavement had been denied by others. Three of the participants experienced the loss of a mother, one the loss of a special teacher, and another the loss of a brother.

Sennett’s (1987) essential description of the experience of having one’s bereavement denied speaks to all bereaved individuals in our Western culture who are avoided or left alone in their grief. The author (1987: 87) notes that although the bereaved person’s world is profoundly changed and the pain of loss is continually present to the individual, others fail to share, or to meaningfully acknowledge, his or her world. The loneliness of living in a different world is reinforced by the active denial by others of the bereaved person’s grief and their rejection of his or her world. Thus, in addition to experiencing the pain of loss through death, the bereaved person “experiences a denial of the full meaning of this pain”, and of the opportunity to share his or her grief with others.

Sennett's study is significant not only in that it highlights the difficulties that others experience in being-with-the-bereaved, but also that other mourners in our western culture may experience this social prohibition against mourning to a greater or lesser extent (Gorer, 1965/1987, 1973). From the literature review, this prohibition appears to be especially true of sibling loss.

4.2.3.2 The Role of “Siblinghood”

In the psychological literature, the status of becoming a sibling does not have the same developmental significance as becoming a mother/father or husband/ wife. Socially the role of “siblinghood” does not have a prominent place in our culture (Riches & Dawson, 2000). While in the event of the loss of a parent a child is generally perceived by those around him or her to have suffered an important loss

and others almost always recognise and acknowledge the significance of such a loss, “society seems to expect that the pain of sibling loss is neither intense nor of long duration” (Moss & Moss, 1986: 412). When a sibling dies it is mostly the parents or the sibling's spouse and/or child(ren) that others are mostly concerned about. Hence for some surviving siblings, particularly adult siblings, there may be “the stress of profound grief but little opportunity or support for its expression” (Moss & Moss, 1986: 412; Gorer, 1965/1987).

Other researchers (Mahon & Page, 1995; Vande Kemp, 1999) have also noted that sibling loss often leaves survivors as socially less recognised mourners. This can devalue the fact and experience of sibling grief and encourages some survivors to mask their own grief with consequent negative consequences. Loss that is not acknowledged, that remains too little mourned, leaves wounds half open; wounds half closed.

4.2.3.3 Relationship with Peers, Professionals and Others

Throughout the experience of sibling loss we find several relationships that (apart from the parent-child relationship) can facilitate or impede the healing process of grief, e.g. extended family, peers, teachers, neighbours, pastors, professionals, and members of a support group. Several researchers report changes in peer relationships following the loss of a sibling. Some of these changes may come from the bereaved sibling's own feelings of being different and withdrawing from friends; others are related to peers' difficulties in being with someone who has experienced a death in the family. As peers are especially important in the life of a developing child and assume even greater significance during adolescence (when relationships with friends are fundamental to completing developmental tasks, e.g. identity, separating from the family), some of these studies will now be reviewed.

- **Withdrawal, Loneliness and Isolation**

The bereaved sibling's sense of feeling different from his or her peers and friends, who still "live in innocence", has been highlighted by Davies (1991a). In cases where adolescents feel very different from their peers, the basis of the peer bond is weakened, and the sibling may respond by withdrawing. Thus, the adolescent may not receive the social support that he or she needs. Davies' (1999) later and more comprehensive study of sibling loss also emphasises the significance of peer relationships. She notes that the feeling of “I don't belong” stems not only from the reorganisation of the family following the loss and a sense of not being part of the family, but that feeling different from peers and withdrawing from peer group interaction may also intensify a sense of “not belonging” and of isolation.

In her study, Rosen (1984-85: 314) found 32 references to “less significant others” of which 30 were "negative" and only 2 were “positive.” Responses from others outside the immediate family that were

experienced as negative, fell into two general categories: statements that conveyed in varying degrees the message, “be strong for your parents” and, “pointed silences” about the loss, which were experienced by the surviving siblings as neglect of their needs. Rosen notes that such responses increased the sense of loneliness, isolation and unacknowledged grief of the respondents. In only two instances were the interactions felt to be helpful and included: “adult friends and neighbours, teachers, peers, aunts, uncles and cousins, grandparents, police, religious representatives” (1984-1985: 314).

While Rosen (1984-1985) recognises that individuals outside the family have difficulty knowing what to say or what their role should be with a recently bereaved child, she concludes that the responses of less significant others may have a greater impact on surviving siblings than they realise: “Close enough to be trusted by the surviving sibling, yet far enough removed not to be struggling with deeply felt grief at the same time, a close personal friend or teacher may be the most appropriate person to whom a grieving child can turn” (1984-1985: 315).

In the study by Mahon and Page (1995:20) which explored “stressors and modifiers” of sibling grief, the authors found that feelings of isolation after the death were common among bereaved siblings either because they chose to be alone or because they believed that everyone was focused on the child who had died and on the needs of the parents.

- **What was Helpful**

With regard to the question “What helped?” (Mahon & Page, 1995), most surviving siblings were able to identify people or events that were helpful to them in the time since the sibling’s death. Friends (particularly those who either made an effort to be supportive or had experienced the death of someone close to them) were perceived as helpful. Some children described a support group, seeing a psychiatrist, and talking to a teacher as helpful.

Hogan and DeSantis (1994) also found that in addition to extended family and friends, other social support systems, e.g. professionals such as psychologists and ministers of religion, were also experienced as helpful. However, only two bereaved siblings described how individual professionals provided support. Another ten respondents mentioned organised peer support groups (Compassionate Friends) as being helpful during their grieving. These adolescents received support by learning that other bereaved siblings experienced similar thoughts and feelings over the death of a brother or sister. Being with peers who had experienced a loss made them feel “less alone” and helped them to learn that “others had coped with similar difficult times” (1994: 138).

- **What was Not Helpful**

Mahon and Page (1995) found that bereaved siblings experienced “others” (unspecified but possibly referring to people outside the immediate family) as unhelpful when they felt that their responses to the loss were being judged by others as right or wrong, as appropriate or inappropriate (See also Rosenblatt *et al.*, 1991). A judgemental response leaves bereaved siblings feeling that it might not be acceptable to feel or respond in certain ways. This effectively blocks the grief work.

Other things that were perceived as not helpful were mostly things that people did or did not do (Mahon & Page, 1995). People (particularly friends) who were not actively supportive, or who lacked regard for their deceased sibling, were perceived as not helpful. Some children also did not like being asked to discuss the situation or their feelings when they “didn’t feel like it” (1995: 22). Some children thought that everyone should know about the sibling’s death, whereas others believed that this was private information. The authors conclude that responses of peers and others, as well as responses of parents, may be “modifiers” or “stressors” of sibling grief.

In the study by Hogan and DeSantis (1994), three types of social system responses emerged that were experienced as unhelpful and hindered the sibling’s grief. These included insensitivity of others, rumours and gossip, and the “perception of an unfair world” (1994:141). Respondents experienced non-bereaved persons as insensitive when they said that they knew how the bereaved adolescents felt; told them how, when, and for how long they should grieve; minimised the bereavement process through statements such as “I know how you feel”; and made judgmental statements, “you should be over it by now” (1994: 141). Bereaved adolescents experienced such advice as preventing them from dealing with the death on their own terms. Significantly, Hogan and DeSantis (1994) note that people who were perceived as “insensitive” were not identified in any definite way. They were simply referred to as “ones”, “they”, “people”, or “someone.” Since the respondents received the questionnaire by post, there was no opportunity to clarify whether these were friends (that were no longer “friends” and therefore not included under “peers”) or “others”.

Other factors that made it more difficult for these adolescents to deal with their grief included rumours and gossip about events related to the death or about the character of their dead brother or sister. Negative references to their deceased sibling’s character spoiled their memory and made it harder for them to cope with their grief. Hogan and DeSantis (1994: 142) conclude that, “support emanating from the social system was [generally] viewed dialectically as both helping and hindering the coping process”.

4.2.4 Intervention and Support

The available research has contributed to identifying the needs of bereaved siblings, and most of the studies cited above offer suggestions for helping survivors to cope with the loss of a brother or sister. Individual counselling, psychotherapy, play therapy, family or “conjoint” therapy, and support groups for bereaved siblings have all been put forward as facilitating the healing process of grief. In addition, home care intervention programmes, as opposed to hospital care of terminally ill siblings, have been suggested as potentially assisting the family to deal with the illness and loss openly. By including siblings in the care of the ill brother or sister and by giving clear and honest information about the condition of their sibling, children would be in a better position to make sense of what is happening.

As early as 1964, Cain *et al.* noted that paediatric workers had already “wisely insisted” that in cases of children’s deaths the physician’s responsibility should not only be to the dying child but to the entire family unit and that the “family unit” should include the deceased child’s siblings as well as his or her parents. Cain *et al.* (1964: 751) recognised the need for a full “preventive-therapeutic approach to the bereaved siblings, integrated with assistance to the parents”, as a major step towards preventing what they had earlier referred to as the “senseless arithmetic of adding newly warped lives to the one already tragically ended”.

From their experience of survivor families with unresolved grief reactions, Krell and Rabkin (1979) also strongly recommend family therapy as the treatment of choice. The authors argue that in the post-traumatic situations that they had explored, allowing families to grieve together, although painful, could be a “solidifying experience” (1979: 476). They add that, “family roles and identities can best be freed up and reorganised in the nexus of the primary group”, and that opening up communication and “demystifying” the loss experience can also be most effectively handled in “conjoint meetings” (1979: 476).

Others (Birenbaum *et al.*, 1989-1990; Davies, 1999; Fanos, 1996; Fanos and Nickerson, 1991) have suggested that the openness of parents, others and caregivers to listening to the bereaved sibling’s fears and anxieties, as well as an ability to give honest and clear information, would do much to enable a child to make sense of the loss and to alleviate guilt. Within the family, involving children in activities following the loss and making them feel included, may dissipate feelings of “not belonging” (Davies, 1999) and the sense of unreality of the death.

Significantly, studies that explored the effects of a home care intervention programme, as opposed to hospital care (Mulhern *et al.*, 1983; Lauer *et al.*, 1985) found that siblings of children who received terminal care at home were less emotionally inhibited, withdrawn and fearful than siblings of children who received terminal care in the hospital. In their exploratory study, conducted one year after the

death of a sibling, Lauer *et al.* (1985) found that children involved in home care reported significantly greater awareness of impending death and a higher degree of support from their parents. They also perceived themselves and their parents as having done everything possible to help the dying child, and derived more comfort from attending the funeral than did the children whose siblings died in the hospital. Although more siblings in the home care group were present at the death, none reported it to be frightening. Many of the siblings felt that their presence was helpful, that their relationships with parents and other siblings had improved or grown closer since the loss, and, unlike the siblings in the hospital group, that their emotional support during bereavement came mainly from the immediate family. Some of these themes are echoed in a more recent study by Rodger and Tooth (2004) involving adult siblings' perceptions of family life and the loss of a sibling with a disability.

4.3 Concluding Comments

It is clear that interest in sibling bereavement has grown and that the significance of this loss experience has received considerable attention since the 1980s, more specifically as it relates to children and adolescents. As a direct result of the pioneering work of Kubler-Ross (1969/1985, 1974), death, and speaking about death and dying (particularly with children), has been opened up and become less of a “taboo” subject in nursing. Yet, in the main, sibling loss, and particularly adult sibling loss, remain in the shadows. Over and over in the literature we are told that individuals who experience the loss of a brother or sister either withdraw and keep to themselves, or “struggle” for recognition of their grief. Again and again we hear that surviving siblings, alone with their grief, either suffer “symptoms” for many years or overcome it so that they are “better” for having endured it. To tell the story within this literature in very few words, it is as if our Western society requires the twin burial of the *dead*, and of the *need to grieve*; if grief refuses to be buried, then one must resolve it quickly or run the risk of being adjudged “at risk”, “referable”... in brief, “psychopathologised”.

Taken together, the studies that were examined in this section reveal that research in the 1980s and 1990s has centred on broadening and deepening our understanding of the sibling bereavement process. However, with few exceptions, most of the studies focus on one or two variables or aspects of the loss that are thought to affect bereaved siblings (either positively or negatively) rather than on the *meanings* themselves or on the *process* of this unique loss experience as it evolves over time. If one were to provide literature to caregivers of bereaved siblings, it would be difficult to find a study that adequately conceptualises the lived experience in all its aspects.

It is clear that the loss of a brother or sister is a very complex phenomenon that cannot be understood solely as an intrapsychic, developmental, family-structural or socio-cultural one. Furthermore, it has become clear that this phenomenon cannot be fully understood in terms of immediate or short-term responses to the loss. Unfortunately, when the study of loss is approached by way of any one of these

perspectives alone, the full meaning of the loss for the individual is lost. This may account for several of the apparent contradictions that emerge from the foregoing research studies, for example, low/high self-concept; resilience/vulnerability; and strengthening/weakening of faith.

The journey through the literature is very worthwhile because it provides mounting evidence for the need to shift focus; a need not simply to add qualitative aspects to predominantly quantitative methods, but to change the ground of future research. In order to study directly the experience and meanings to the individual sibling who has lost a brother or sister through death, it is necessary to change the philosophical standpoint that in turn legitimises a different method, a qualitative method. Hence, the current study attempts to expand the field, seeking not ultimate clarity, but rather integrated, holistic and comprehensive knowledge. The following chapter addresses a research method that I believe is best suited to this aim.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STUDY: METHODOLOGY

5. Introduction

To link concisely with what has gone before, the theme of sibling loss has been neglected for too long. Voices from both within and outside the psychology profession have registered critical complaints about this oversight (Davies, 1999; Rosen, 1986; Vande Kemp, 1999). As a result of these challenges, researchers over the last two and a half decades have tried to break the silence.

Nevertheless, a dominant concern which is still being expressed is that "few insights into sibling bereavement have come from psychologists" (Vande Kemp, 1999: 355).

Personal or dynamic issues have possibly helped to keep the theme shrouded in the shadows.

However, in terms of the literature review, it is clear that methodological issues dominate.

Mainstream quantitative procedures do not lend themselves to the existential complexity of the phenomenon that has been outlined. Sibling loss cannot be measured or causally explained. While qualitative methods have performed a yeoman's task in bringing the plight of the bereaved sibling to our attention, positivistic science still dominates. A radical breakthrough has not appeared.

Explicating the lived meaning of losing a brother or sister to death, and revealing its psychological structure remains to be explored and understood.

From the foregoing literature review, it is clear that sibling loss is a complex human phenomenon that merits study by psychologists and yet one requiring an exploration into its *meaning* and content. In order to do justice to the phenomenon a method is required that is comprehensive and that can provide a coherent sense of the phenomenon as a whole; can illuminate the experience as a Gestalt. Simple reactions to the loss of a sibling are only a small part of this loss experience. The questions arising from the literature review call for an exploration of "*what* it is like" to experience the loss of a brother or sister and "*how*" the surviving sibling lives this loss as its meaning unfolds. It is *understanding*, not interpretation, explanation or verification, that can ground effective action in helping bereaved siblings.

Since the aim of the present study is to discover the psychological meanings expressed implicitly or explicitly by surviving siblings to the loss of a brother or sister, a qualitative approach is used. The question, "*What* is the experience of sibling loss?", requires a descriptive response rather than hypothesis testing and/or explanation or interpretation. Rather than using a quantitative approach, the loss of a sibling will be approached inductively, as a human phenomenon that needs to be understood on a phenomenal level and approached within the attitude of "subjective openness" (Moustakas, 1994)

and discovery. A qualitative research approach seems to be the obvious alternative to a natural scientific method since it focuses on the lived experience, on the struggles, pain and suffering experienced by others, rather than on theories removed from day-to-day living (May, 1958: 33).

Given the objectives of the research, i.e. to explore the meaning of the loss of a brother or sister as the individual actually lives and experiences it and to give a voice to surviving siblings who frequently sorrow in silence, I decided that an existential-phenomenological perspective would be the most effective one to use. By employing a *human scientific* approach as elucidated by Giorgi (1970), I hope to discover and describe the structure of the experience of sibling loss. The study uses data obtained in the form of spontaneous descriptions based on the concrete experience of losing a brother or sister, as it appears in the life-world of three participants. The methodological approach is open-ended, and the emphasis is on discovery, on revealing what the bereaved siblings themselves have to say.

5.1 Methodological Orientation

Of the qualitative methods (i.e. case studies, hermeneutics, grounded theory, and the heuristic approach), the descriptive-phenomenological method developed by Giorgi (1975, 1983, 1985, 1989a, 1989b, 1994) is the one most tailored to psychological phenomena and also meets the criteria of science in the sense that "it is methodical, systematic, critical and potentially intersubjective" (Giorgi, 1989b: 40). More specifically, it is well suited to providing greater depth and richness to the meaning that the individual gives on *his/her own terms* to the loss of a brother or sister.

While it is important to note that the phenomenological psychological method has a very sound philosophical base, the intention of the following section is not to review phenomenological philosophy, but to focus on the concepts and methods regarding the structural approach to be used in this study.

5.1.1. Philosophical Ground of the Phenomenological Approach

Within existential-phenomenological psychology, and in using phenomenological methods for investigating and describing phenomena, the following roots can be traced:

During the 1850s, the Danish thinker, Søren Kierkegaard, by examining his own personal struggles, found in them examples of the universal struggles of being human. In 1900, Edmund Husserl's (1913-1962) *Logical Investigations* launched phenomenology, a systematic effort to found both philosophy and science on a rigorous basis. Husserl privileged consciousness and experience in the everyday life-world as the basis of knowledge and leaned upon intuition and imaginative free variation as the basic research tools. Martin Heidegger's book, *Being and Time* (1927/1962), joined these two streams of thought, and existential-phenomenology was born. It is important to note that in contemporary

writings "phenomenology" and "existential-phenomenology" are terms that are used interchangeably (Valle and Halling, 1989).

Giorgi's empirical phenomenological psychological method grew out of continental phenomenology, and is based especially on the phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) but applied specifically to the study of psychological phenomena. As noted above, Edmund Husserl, concerned himself with opening up the phenomena of everyday lived experience. For Husserl, consciousness could only be studied in relation to the world in which we live. Our perceptions are not just inside our heads, they are *out there* with the *real outer object* (Kruger, 1984/1987: 56). Husserl's philosophy was based on the premise, "Back to the things themselves" and involved the understanding of man's everyday existence through a "descriptive psychology" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Husserl claimed that the life-world (where everyday lived-experience takes place) was prior to the institutions of the sciences and he stated that we would have to go back to the experience itself in order to access the experience as it is lived. All human experiences and all knowledge originate in the life-world.

Within the existential-phenomenological perspective, consciousness is viewed as intentional, that is, consciousness is always directed *towards something*, towards an object of experience. This means that meaning exists within certain horizons and that the individual creates meaning within those horizons. Von Eckartsberg (cited in Gildenhuys, 1989: 879) sums it up as follows:

"Husserl's fundamental contribution was to call our attention to the study of the meaning constituting power of the acts of consciousness. He developed systematic reflection as a research method."

Phenomenological research bears heavily upon Husserl's (1913/1962) original thesis of intentionality. With the development of systematic reflection, Husserl discovered the complexity of the 'horizontal nature' of consciousness. This means that a certain intentionality exists and that it cannot be separated from the horizon in which it is directed. Thus meaning is co-created within the meaning-horizons that are given. In other words, "it is not the subject which has a directedness-to-the-object ... but the subject is the world" (Van Den Berg, 1980: 33). As stated by Merleau-Ponty: "The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world ... " (1962: xvii). Thus, from the perspective of consciousness as intentional, consciousness must be seen not only as a focus on the world as seen from within the present or as directed towards "real" objects (existing in time, space, and causality), but also as consciousness directed from previous experiences or towards "ir-real" objects (not existing in time, space, causality), objects such as loss and death; nothingness. This has relevance to the study

of sibling loss. Stated somewhat differently, Husserl advocates the epoche or reduction which "brackets" the "real" and withholds existential consent in order to study meanings.

Martin Heidegger radically extended Husserl's intentionality of consciousness and postulated that "being conscious is an intentional act through which man lets the world appear to him" (Kruger, 1979/1988: 28). Heidegger (1927/1962) introduced the concept *Dasein* (being-there-in-the-world) in order to explicate the mode of being of humans. It is the essence of *Dasein* to "be with" others. "The world of man's Being-in-the-world is ever and primordially one which I share with others. The world of *Dasein* is essentially *Mitwelt*" (Boss, 1982: 55). Our life is always structured in terms of our relationship to the world in which we live. This too has relevance for the study of sibling loss as it occurs within the context of the family.

In exploring the lived experience of the loss of a sibling it is accordingly appropriate to use the above philosophical foundations. They are ways of thinking that focus upon the way we, as human subjects, co-constitute our perceptions of the world in tune with our lived experience.

5.1.2 Empirical Phenomenological Psychological Research

Phenomenological research is descriptive and qualitative but differs from other qualitative approaches in that it focuses on the experienced meaning of the phenomenon under investigation with a view to discovering and describing the structure of the experience. In contrast to mainstream psychological research that is deductive and usually starts with a hypothesis and attempts either to confirm or to reject the researcher's theory, phenomenological research is *inductive* and *discovery* oriented, beginning with the subject's/participant's description, which is then transformed into psychological language.

Phenomenological research focuses on the meaning that an individual gives to the experience rather than on a concern with causality or the frequency of certain actions, behaviour patterns or occurrences (Polkinghorne, 1989: 44) for, as noted by Giorgi (1970:165), "psychology should be the study of experience and behaviour as it is experienced and behaved". It is the individual's *experienced meaning* of his/her overt actions or behaviour that is of psychological relevance. In this respect the phenomenological approach also seems to be the most appropriate to use, since it serves to overcome some of the complex methodological issues involved in sibling research. A sibling's grief and/or the ongoing experience of loss and its long-term effects transcend(s) space and time. Phenomenology, because it is a discipline of meaning, is uniquely suited to studying the time lapse, the subtle relationship between chronological and psychological (phenomenal) age, the meaning of gender differences, and the experience of *position* within the family. The latter refers not only to the eldest/youngest child but also to phenomena such as "favourite" child or which gender is more highly

valued within the family. Thus, in a phenomenological study, what have been assumed as the factors that predict reactions to sibling loss, are *bracketed* in favour of what the participant will report as meaningful.

Broadly speaking, "the phenomenological approach addresses the life-world; the world as it is lived and shaped by people" (Fischer & Alapack, 1987: 104). To understand the experience of sibling loss, we concern ourselves with the phenomenon in the conscious world of everyday living, what Husserl identified as the life-world or *Lebenswelt*. This is the world as given in awareness and immediately expressed rather than interpreted scientifically. The phenomenon to be studied has to be described exactly as it presents itself, neither adding to, nor subtracting from, what is *given* (Giorgi, 1994: 206). As already discussed, this is based on Husserl's conviction that true knowledge involves going "back to the things themselves" (Giorgi, 1985: 8). Phenomenology considers it more rigorous to stay with the data; to account for all the data, and to make no knowledge claims that cannot be demonstrated out of the data themselves. It is a question of "evidence". For Husserl it is not rigorous evidence to view data in some theory that is extrinsic to the data themselves. According to him, one does violence to the data, to the "given" (i.e. the "intentional object") when one views these in the light of a theory that tries to make sense of the data. As stated by Giorgi (1989b: 45): "In phenomenology one gets a straight-forward description of what is happening that is neither explanation nor reconstruction". The quest is to understand the "what" rather than the "why" of the lived experience and to reveal the structure or essence of the phenomenon as it is given in awareness.

While phenomenological research focuses on human experience, it is not a direct report of the experience but a search for the structural meaning of the experience. Thus phenomenological research provides a *descriptive* structural analysis of any lived experience and thereby identifies the styles and structures of everyday phenomena. As expressed by Giorgi (1989b:41):

"Phenomenology is the study of phenomena as experienced. Phenomenologists seek the logos (patterns, structures) of the phenomena they are studying. ... Experienced reality is what phenomenologists are interested in, not reality as it may be conceived or reality understood objectively or reality understood as it might be 'in itself'. It's always the experienced phenomenon that is being referred to..."

In general then, the phenomenological approach seeks to discover the *structure and form* of a phenomenon, to understand the experience, not the cause and effect relationship that might serve as an explanation of the ontology of the phenomenon. Giorgi (1975: 83) defines phenomenology as:

"... the study of the structures, and the variations of structures of the consciousness to which any thing, event or person appears. It is interested in elucidating both that which appears and

the manner in which it appears, as well as in the overall structure that relates the 'that which' with its mode or manner [i.e. with the 'How']".

This is an important distinction with regard to the method's applicability to the present study. Firstly, as already mentioned, there is very little knowledge about the structure and meaning of the phenomenon of sibling loss; secondly, in his or her being-in-the-world, the research participant is inextricably linked to the world (i.e. to a family, a sibling group, an extended family, and a community); and thirdly, it is clear that the experience of sibling loss and the grief which accompanies it is a process and not an event or situation that can be circumscribed in time and space. The phenomenological method allows for the shifts/changes as the process unfolds and evolves over time; it also allows for the many variables that surround and engulf the phenomenon, and their interrelatedness.

Heidegger (1927/1962) purports that *Dasein* and the world are interrelated. The human is a network of relations. This is particularly relevant in the situation of a family loss. When a sibling loses a sibling, parents lose a child, a spouse loses a wife/husband, a child loses a mother/father, a grandparent loses a grandchild. In this respect, the phenomenological method is most suited to addressing the questions, "What is the experience of sibling loss?" (i.e. the structure on the individual and general level); and "How is it lived?"; this indicates the course/progression of the loss experience and the changes that take place over time as well as what gives rise to these changes.

Another appealing aspect of the phenomenological approach in terms of its suitability for the present study, is its comprehensiveness (Giorgi, 1994: 192). Paradoxically, it is for this reason that the approach has been perceived as primarily "propaedeutic to science", that is, as a preparatory or preliminary research method. However, as Giorgi (1975: 84) notes, the phenomenological psychological method is concerned with "more than the point of departure of research; it has relevance for the entire investigation". It is precisely because it has value for the entire research project that phenomenology can make a contribution to the psychology of sibling loss.

In phenomenological research, the description always takes place within the attitude of the phenomenological reduction, that is, the researcher mentally "brackets" or puts into abeyance all past theories or knowledge about the phenomenon in order to be present to what the participants have to report (Giorgi, 1994: 212; 1989b: 45). What the reduction offers is the possibility of a fresh and different way of experiencing the phenomenon that may provide new intuitions about the phenomenon under investigation. The phenomenological reduction also means that the researcher withholds "existential assent" of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 1989b: 45; 1994: 206). This means that the phenomenologist is studying what appears to human consciousness, what someone experiences and

can report on, and does not make any knowledge claims outside of what is given. Edmund Husserl's dictum was to stay within "brackets", suspending credence in the existence or truth of what was being reported. My data, therefore, are what subjects report: the objects of their consciousness, without being burdened with the epistemological question that plagues normative science: "Did it really happen that way?".

As already noted, the phenomenological research method uses *description*, as opposed to interpretation or explanation (Giorgi, 2000). It also uses an open-ended research question allowing the participants to describe their loss experience, to speak for themselves, rather than leading them into a direction that the researcher may consider important or relevant to the phenomenon, or in order to verify a specific psychological theory or hypothesis. In this respect, research takes place within a context of *discovery* rather than of verification; of *understanding* rather than explanation or interpretation. A methodology that makes use of description and language in order to capture the psychological essence of the phenomenon, seems to be the most appropriate choice for the study of the experience of sibling loss. As noted by Kruger (1986, in Gildenhuis, 1989: 838): "Language is our first and last method and framework for understanding...".

In sum, in building on to the qualitative work of Davies (1999), Pape (1999, 2002), and others mentioned in the previous chapter (researchers and clinicians who place themselves within the *human scientific* rather than within the traditional natural scientific model), the phenomenological perspective seems to be the best way to approach this study since it gives priority to the phenomenon under investigation and is able to reveal the meaning of human experience while still maintaining a systematic, rigorous and reliable methodology (Giorgi, 1989).

Moustakas (1994: 101) succinctly sums up the phenomenological research method as follows:

"Through phenomenology a significant methodology is developed for investigating human experience and for deriving knowledge from a state of pure consciousness. One learns to see naively and freshly again, to value conscious experience, to respect the evidence of one's senses, and to move toward an intersubjective knowing of things, people, and everyday experiences".

5.2 The Research Process

In structuring the research process, the following steps were taken in order to answer the question, "What is the experience of sibling loss?"

1. The investigation began with a literature review and with an examination of key theoretical perspectives on grief and of themes that emerged in other research studies. This provided an

orientation to the phenomenon and alerted me to possible themes that might require clarification if alluded to by the subjects. I also did a self-reflective search, noting my own meaning as a sibling and my personal experience of sibling loss. In addition, I noted what my clients have shared about their own losses of a brother or sister. These early reflective steps allowed me to articulate my own presuppositions and biases so that I might bracket them, not impose my own expectations but remain open to discovering what the participants themselves would communicate.

2. The next step required the formulation of a research question that would be open-ended and reveal the lived experience of this loss experience in a spontaneous, pre-reflective and concrete manner.

3. A descriptive approach was used to gather information from individuals who volunteered to take part in a preliminary study. Both written descriptions and a recorded interview were obtained and, on the basis of their responses, the interview emerged as the most appropriate form of data collection (as the sense of not being alone allowed for a fuller unfolding of the experience). It was also appropriate in this study to participate directly in data gathering because of the importance of the encounter and also in order to give a voice to survivors. (This aspect will be discussed in greater detail under section 5.3.2: "The Preliminary Study").

4. The recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed. Data were retrospective as the impact of the loss of a sibling is a process that unfolds over time. Although retrospective data may be considered "unreliable" from a strictly scientific perspective, Giorgi (1994: 203) attests that "... it is the perceived reality that phenomenologists are interested in, and often 'distortions' are more vital than veridical perceptions".

Polkinghorne (1989: 48) clarifies this as follows:

"The data of phenomenological research are descriptions of experience as it presents itself, not descriptions of objects or actions as they are assumed to exist outside of experience. The subject's reports are taken as descriptions of their experience, not as statements of an independent reality. The interest remains focused on the subject's experience even when researchers doubt the existence of objects being described".

5. Once the interviews had been transcribed, the lived experience as it presented itself to the participants was analysed using Giorgi's phenomenological psychological method and leaning also on the work of Wertz (1983), Colaizzi (1978), Bargdill (2000), and Qualls (1998). The steps used in the data analysis and explication will be discussed in detail under section 5.4.

5.2.1 On Bracketing

As stated earlier, the phenomenological psychological approach to research takes place within the context of openness and discovery and not within the context of verification or legitimisation. Thus, in the study of any meaningful experience, self-reflection is central and involves a process that is known as "bracketing". This involves the process of identifying one's preconceived notions (i.e. biases) regarding the experience being investigated in order to minimise their effects on clearly explicating the meaning of the subjects' descriptions (Qualls, 1998). Husserl (1913/1962) calls this suspension (or bracketing), the *first phenomenological epoche*. Stated simply, what have been *assumed as factors* that predict reactions to sibling loss, are put into abeyance so that the researcher can attend to what is present or given in awareness, that is, in favour of what the participant himself or herself will report as meaningful.

Accordingly, in using the phenomenological approach, I momentarily "bracketed" or put aside all psychological theories related to loss and grief as well as existing research models of grief. Likewise I put in parentheses my own presuppositions about the phenomenon under investigation. This phenomenological strategy, i.e. "bracketing" of what is already known about sibling loss from any standpoint, is in the service of genuine objective knowledge. It is the method for controlling bias and prejudice by constantly cross-examining and holding in check assumptions and presuppositions - personal, theoretical, moral, and religious. As stated by Giorgi (1994: 201):

"... descriptive science practitioners within a phenomenological framework are meant to provide as results only descriptions of structures that appear to the researcher's consciousness, precisely as they appear. They are meant neither to speculate nor to interpret".

After an independent survey of this phenomenon had been obtained, the brackets were removed so that there might be a genuine interface between the findings of the present study, psychological theories relating to loss and grief and the results that have been articulated from other research.

Thus, the review of the existing literature and a self-reflective search constituted a necessary and important first step in my research program, and also a necessary last step. Apart from controlling for bias, this step was also undertaken in order to be more aware of significant themes of this less-understood phenomenon and to explore these themes in greater depth should they emerge spontaneously during the interviews. Explicating dimensions of the experience also assisted in the formulation of a *research question* that would do justice to the phenomenon under investigation.

In terms of the *self-reflective search*, writing down my own experience of the loss of a sibling (still-born) and reflecting on other losses in my family of origin, gave me a better hold on my loss experiences and made it possible to be receptive to what the participants were experiencing and

describing; as expressed by Giorgi (1989b: 41), "to discover and describe the structure of the 'given' as experienced by the participants".

With my own history of loss in mind, I discovered a number of biases within myself that needed to be put into abeyance regarding the experience being investigated. In the early stages of this study, I had anticipated that the siblings that I interviewed would describe a profound individual/personal pain and that the focus would be on the significance of the loss of the relationship with the deceased sibling. During the course of my research, I discovered that these were presuppositions about the nature of sibling loss. Identifying my own biases regarding the loss of a sibling gave me a sensitivity which enabled me to put in abeyance my preconceptions and assumptions in order to maximise my openness to the experience of others. In this study, the participants describe their own loss as they lived and experienced it. In the process, the relevant contextual variables emerge from their descriptions and form part of the structure of the experience.

5.3 Data Gathering

To perform a phenomenological study, data are required that reveal the lived experience of the loss of one's sibling in a spontaneous, pre-reflective ("naïve") and direct manner. Although it is unusual for individuals who have suffered the loss of a significant other not to have reflected deeply on their loss and they cannot, therefore, be totally "naïve" regarding this experience, Giorgi (1989a, 1989b) maintains that respondents are nevertheless "naïve" with respect to psychological understanding (i.e. making psychological sense of the data).

5.3.1 Research Participants

In a phenomenological study the main requirement for selection is that the participant "has had the experience", and is able to provide rich and fruitful *descriptions* of the phenomenon being investigated (Polkinghorne, 1989: 47). What matters, phenomenologically speaking, is that the phenomenon "is present to someone's consciousness" (Giorgi, 1975: 84) and that the individual is able to report on his or her concrete experience of loss. As the aim of the present study is to illuminate the meaning of sibling loss as it unfolds over time, rather than to focus on the more immediate manifestations of grief, an additional requirement was to speak with survivors who had lost a sibling at least two years prior to participation in the study.

Volunteer research participants were recruited by word of mouth through friends and colleagues who were aware of my interest in the phenomenon. The response was positive with approximately fifteen possible participants being mentioned. However, because of the potentially painful and sensitive nature of the topic, only seven candidates, who qualified in terms of the above requirements, were approached. Thus, it is uncertain whether they would all have been *willing* volunteers. As a clinician,

I myself struggled with ethical aspects of opening up memories for individuals who themselves had not expressed a need to explore or to revisit their loss. Yet, as I began the process of contacting these individuals in order to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study, most of them responded readily and with varying degrees of interest; even with some enthusiasm. For some, because of the absence of available self-help literature on the subject of sibling loss, there was a keen interest to explore and understand their emotions and to gain a better insight into the meaning of their loss. For others, there was the expressed hope that, by sharing their story, others who had experienced a similar loss could be helped or could find some comfort. For still others, there was an expressed desire to speak about and remember their deceased brother or sister.

The volunteers who made themselves available were contacted telephonically and, once their interest and willingness to participate was confirmed, they were verbally informed of the research design and each participant was assured of confidentiality and anonymity regarding personal information. Following the telephonic discussion and their verbal consent to participate in the study, an orientation-invitation letter (in Appendix C) was sent to five volunteers.

Over the course of three months, open-ended, unstructured interviews were conducted with these volunteers (four women and one man), all of whom had experienced the loss of a brother or sister in a very real and intense way. All the participants that were interviewed provided rich and adequate descriptions necessary to generate common themes and the essential structure of the phenomenon. Because of the length of the interviews and the space constraints in a study of this nature, only the first three respondents are included in the study.

Although the number of subjects selected for phenomenologically-based studies varies considerably (Polkinghorne, 1989), a review of dissertations and published research using Giorgi's phenomenological method reveals that three subjects are adequate. As noted by Polkinghorne (1989: 48), what is important in phenomenological research is to obtain richly varied descriptions of the phenomenon, not statistical generalisation.

Giorgi (1985: 12) also points out that the everyday life-world is richer and more complex than the psychological perspective. Thus, one cannot cover all empirical, concrete, specific eventualities in a single research project. How the research situation is constituted provides certain strengths and other weaknesses but, as proposed by Giorgi (1989b:44), "[t]he clarification of context is one of the chief ways of achieving rigor in qualitative research".

With this focus in mind, it is important to summarise some of the biographical details of the three participants in the study. Also important to note is that the participants were all volunteers and that I

did not select bereaved siblings on the basis of gender, from a specific cultural group, within a certain age range, or from a specific family size.

The following information emerged from the interviews:

While the participants' ages ranged between 25 and 62 years, all had lost their siblings in young adulthood; all were still living at home at the time of the loss and, in all cases, the death of their sibling was sudden and due to accidents. Each had lost his or her sibling when he or she was old enough to begin to move away from the family and had established a degree of independence from the family, but when the deceased sibling was still relatively young and the loss was sudden and could be considered "a-normative" or "off-time" (Moss & Moss, 1986).

The participants were all female and between the ages of 21 and 23 years at the time of the loss. The age gap between the participants and their deceased siblings ranged from 3 to 5 years. All were university graduates from middle-class families, were born in South Africa and exposed to both English and Afrikaans. The language used by two of the participants was English, which is the home language of the one and second language of the other (as well as that of the researcher). The other participant chose to speak in Afrikaans, which is her home language (and in which the researcher is also proficient). Her interview was translated into English; an attempt was made to stay as close as possible to the participant's own words and the subtle nuances of meaning, thus the translated interview may not flow as well as the transcribed interviews of those who reported their experience directly in English. However, it is significant that *all* the interviews were replete with hesitations and pauses that seemed to be due more to the profoundly emotional and sometimes overwhelming nature of the experience than to the specific language used. (The original, unedited, interview in Afrikaans is included in Appendix B).

Although the initial aim was to obtain more diversity, that is, by selecting male and female subjects of different ages who had lost a sibling to death through a variety of circumstances, as is evident from the above, this particular aim was not achieved. Salient similarities between the participants (female, lost their siblings through accidents, etc.) raise the question as to whether the essential structure developed under these circumstances would hold for the phenomenon in other situations (for example, if the sibling had died in middle-adulthood rather than in young-adulthood or from suicide or chronic illness). However, while criticism may be levelled at the present study because of the homogeneity of the subjects, this may also be considered a *strength* because of the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation. As Giorgi notes, a "depth study" already includes more variations than the number of participants would indicate because of multiple expressions from the participants. This natural diversity was in fact evident from the interviews, for instance: diversity in terms of

experienced closeness/distance between the siblings at the time of the loss, the position of the sibling within the family (eldest, youngest, middle child), and the gender of the deceased sibling. Moreover, time elapsed since the loss ranged from two-and-a-half to thirty-nine years, and there was diversity in terms of culture and religion. Two of the participants were left as only children, while the third has one remaining elder brother. One was indirectly involved in the circumstances surrounding her brother's death and her parents had also experienced multiple losses to death (had lost two other children), while the other two participants were totally uninvolved in the circumstances of the loss and their only family loss, prior to the death of their sibling, was that of a grandparent.

An argument can also be made that the first three participants gave very rich accounts of the phenomenon - rich enough to be explicated - and that to have selected the fourth or fifth subject in favour of any of the others may have been perceived as researcher bias; selecting subjects to fit the researcher's needs. For this reason only the *first three* volunteers were selected. Had these subjects not provided rich and adequate descriptions necessary to generate common themes and the essential structure of the phenomenon, then the number of participants would have been increased.

5.3.2 The Preliminary Study

The word "preliminary", in the sense of an exploratory study, is used throughout this study, in order to distinguish it from the mainstream quantitative approach with its research concept of "pilot" study.

Although phenomenological psychological research is descriptive, within this frame of reference it is not possible to say *a priori*, whether written descriptions, interview data, or video recordings would be the best form of data collection. Each is equally useful and fruitful as evidenced in the studies by William Fischer (1989) and Richard Alapack (1975; 1984), who have made use of written descriptions. Optimal suitability, however, is situation-specific and is dependent on the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. A "preliminary" study was mandatory in order to reach an informed choice regarding the most appropriate form of data collection for the present study.

My initial request to three research volunteers was for written descriptions of their experience of losing a brother or sister through death. Only two of the three volunteers succeeded in providing a written description. The written accounts, although varied in length, were somewhat analytical and reflective, and emotions appeared to be contained. (These written descriptions are included in Appendix D as Report A and Report B).

The third volunteer wrestled with this task and finally contacted the researcher to say that she had made several attempts to put words to paper but was unable to do this because "writing it down would make it (i.e. the loss experience) *real*". She was, however, willing (even eager) to share her

experience with me in an interview and a mutually convenient date was arranged. My sense of the word "*real*" is that the written word would limit her, not allow for the shifts and ambiguities of the "real". More importantly, I realised that her story had to be told *to* someone. It was also appropriate in this study to participate directly in data gathering as the process of engaging in the interview gave a voice to the participants, helped to break the silence surrounding the loss and restored a sense of community. The material obtained in the interview was rich and intense, and her description is included in the main body of the study. The interactive process of the dialogue provided a wealth of information of the lived meaning of the loss that was not apparent in the written descriptions. The depth of this participant's description of the loss of her brother would not have been possible if the journey had been travelled alone.

My experience with this volunteer made it very clear that the *interview* was the most appropriate form of data collection for the phenomenon under study. The story of losing a brother or sister to death had to be *told*. It is in the "saying" (speech and discourse) rather than in the "said" (Levinas, 1979: 195) that truth reveals itself. The interview situation, with the moral presence of an Other, provides the holding or containment that makes it less likely that the describer will be self-contained and closed to feelings; makes it more likely that the describer might revisit painful moments and touch pain not yet visited. My experience with her validated the fact that the face-to-face *interview* was not just the *preferred* method of choice but the *only* method by which I could ethically gather data from participants in a study of this nature. (Ethical considerations will be dealt with in section, 5.3.4: "Protection of Research Participants").

With the request for a written description of the experience of sibling loss, the following question was initially put to the volunteers:

"Could you please describe how you felt at the time of the death of your brother/sister and how you experience the loss now"

This constituted the initial research question and was phrased in such a way as not only to gather descriptions of the initial response to the loss, but also to allow participants to describe the process as it unfolded over time. Through the preliminary study, however, I became aware that the use of the word *death* punctuated the experience; it was perhaps too static and might limit the descriptions, not allowing for the full unfolding of the process but rather encouraging descriptions of mere reactions to the *death* (focus on end-state). I decided that these possible difficulties could be overcome by modifying the research question. Thus, the preliminary study not only contributed to the choice of method for gathering data for the study, but also to the refinement and reformulation of the research question; one that would facilitate "the full emergence of the phenomenon in all its aspects: the

situation, the behaviour and the experience of the subject" (Stevick, 1971: 135). I contend that this is the authentic sense of "piloting" and that such preliminary data are also legitimate data, not to be discarded but rather tapped for their meaning.

In the interviews, participants were invited to share with the researcher the details of their loss experience by posing the following question:

"Would you please describe in as much detail as possible, just as the thoughts and feelings come to you, what you experienced at the loss of your brother/sister. Please focus on your feelings, on what it was like for you, at the time of the loss and how you experience the loss now. Please keep in mind that there is no one right or proper way to experience this loss. I am really interested in your experience. You may take as long as you like".

This question was successful in eliciting the experiential nature of the process as it unfolded over time, with all the ambiguities and temporal and spatial shifts that were part of the experience.

5.3.3 Research Interviews

The research interview followed the criteria as set out by Kvale (1983, 1996) and the client-centered approach of Rogers (1951). Thus the interview was open-ended and unstructured, allowing the participants to lead by expressing "what it is like" to lose a brother or sister. The emphasis was on *discovery*, on remaining open to learning what the participants themselves had to say. As noted by Kvale (1996: 1), "[t]he qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to any scientific explanations". In this respect, the interview was in harmony with the philosophy of phenomenological psychology.

After posing the research question, I discovered that I needed to speak very little. The participants had clearly reflected deeply on their loss and their stories were begging to be told. Intervention was necessary only to ask for clarification or amplification of what each subject offered, or to redirect the participant to his or her felt sense of the experience. An attempt was made not to ask questions that were disguised statements or to lead the participants into an area that was of interest to me.

Throughout the data collection and interview procedures, the phenomenological reduction was used in order to be fully present to the experience as described by the participants.

As far as possible, comments consisted of reverberations of statements made by the participants, paraphrasing, summarisation or reflecting content and/or feelings - so as not to impose my views on the subjects' reported experience of their own loss. Thus, the interviews resembled therapeutic interviews. The focus, however, was on the *phenomenon under investigation*, not on the psychological dynamics of the person offering data on grieving. Nevertheless, because of the intensity of the

emotions expressed by some participants, it was difficult, at times, to maintain the stance strictly as outlined by Kvale (1983: 174), i.e. that the focus of the interview is on the life-world or experience of the interviewee and is “theme-oriented, not person-oriented.” Also difficult was to maintain a balance between my role of researcher and that of therapist. Nevertheless, I listened attentively to each participant's story and remained open to the presence of new and unexpected constituents in the description at all times. The power of Husserl's articulation of the achievements of consciousness is relevant here. My conscious awareness allowed me to function in multiple modes: as researcher, therapist and sibling/woman; to distinguish the difference; and to keep separate or cross-over as was situationally appropriate.

Most of the participants were interviewed in my consulting rooms but in one case where it was more convenient for the respondent, the interview took place in her home. This interview was particularly poignant, as the participant was able to point out where she and her brother had played and fought when they were little, where she had been sitting when she received news of his death, etc. However, while the immediacy of the experience was strongly felt in this specific situation, this did not differ significantly from others who were interviewed in my consulting rooms, and all participants were visibly moved by revisiting their loss experience and by recalling memories of their deceased sibling.

The duration of the interviews varied but enough time was afforded to describe the experience in depth, since the goal was to understand the experience of the participants' world through the gathering of rich and adequate descriptive data. Although I allowed for the possibility that some participants may have needed to be interviewed on more than one occasion (depending on the comfort level of the individual), a second interview was found to be unnecessary. All the interviewees felt comfortable to continue even though some were, at times, overcome by deep emotions. The participants also felt that they had sufficient time to describe their experience in full. Interviews generally lasted between one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half hours and were concluded when both researcher and participant felt that they had exhausted all aspects of the experience or, at least, had reached momentary closure.

At the end of the interview, each participant was asked about the experience of revisiting the loss. Initial responses included: "lonely", "as if I said too much", "Good. I like talking about him". Subsequent to the research interview, participants were contacted telephonically regarding the original interviews. The follow-up communication aimed at discovering how the participants had experienced the interview and whether any would require a follow-up consultation or other assistance. Some of the responses at this follow-up included: "It was very painful but I felt like a new person afterwards"; "Felt good. You made me think about a lot of things that I hadn't thought of before". For the one participant, this provided an opportunity for her to clarify certain aspects of her experience as described in the original interview.

With permission from the participants, all interviews were recorded on audio-tape and later transcribed for analysis. A personal thank-you letter (Form C in the Appendix) was posted to each participant.

5.3.4 Protection of Research Participants

Related to some of the above-mentioned aspects is the issue of protection of the participants. As mentioned earlier, as a therapist, I was keenly aware of my responsibility towards the participants and of opening up wounds because of my own interest in the phenomenon rather than as a result of the participant's expressed need to revisit the past. Although all the participants had shown an interest in the phenomenon and were willing to take part in the study, neither I, nor indeed the participants themselves, could know beforehand what would emerge during the discussion. It appeared as the interview progressed that, while the participants had reflected deeply on the loss of their brother or sister, the interview in itself was a journey of discovery. In speaking about their loss experience, participants were creating new meaning of their loss and visiting pain that had not yet been touched.

Van Kaam (1969, in Rahilly, 1993: 58) proposes that one of the requirements of selecting participants for phenomenological analyses is "the ability to sense and to express inner feelings and emotions without shame and inhibition". However, because this cannot be predetermined in a study such as that of sibling loss, ethical considerations for the researcher may arise.

Rosenblatt (1995: 141) contends that this "moral involvement" is not one-sided as he and other researchers carrying out qualitative interviews on loss are often told at the end of the interview by the person being interviewed that he or she has never revealed to others some of the things that were discussed in the interview. Cieurzo and Keitel (1999: 70) alert us to this area of ethical concern. According to the authors, when in-depth interviews focus on painful topics, "unanticipated self-disclosures could be potentially harmful for participants" and, in addition, "when in-depth interviewing is conducted in an informal setting, participants may disclose more than they had planned" (1999: 70). Furthermore, they recommend that the question of "harm versus good" for participants disclosing emotional material needs to be carefully assessed.

A phenomenological psychological study is designed in such a way that the risk of harm is low: there is *full disclosure* of the nature, purpose, and requirements of the research study; individuals *volunteer* to participate in the research as co-researchers; the interviews are open-ended and dialogal, and thus the participant is free to raise those aspects of the experience with which he or she feels comfortable; and *understanding* the experience rather than *interpreting* or analysing the individual is the primary aim, thus the so-called "power differential" (Cieurzo & Keitel, 1999: 70) between researcher and interviewee is minimised. Although the risk is thus low, I did experience the ethical dilemma

associated with conducting a lengthy interview on an intense human experience and then "abandoning" the participant once the data had been collected.

In the present study, there was a possibility that some participants could become distressed by revisiting and reliving intense emotions related to the loss of their brother or sister. As a therapist, I was very aware of the risk that participants may be left with issues that needed clarification or feelings that could not be contained. Thus, possible avenues for grief counselling were identified in case this was needed or if the participant felt the need to explore his or her experience in greater depth. I also offered a follow-up session to all volunteers should they have any issues arising from the interview that they wished to clarify or pursue further.

It is significant that such instances never arose during the research process and all of the interviewees felt that, although the discussion had aroused sad memories, this had been more positive than negative. This response has also been the experience of other research workers investigating sibling loss (Davies, 1999; Fanos, 1996). Indeed, it would appear from the responses of volunteers (both those interviewed and those who participated in the preliminary study), that participants may have benefited in some ways from the opportunity to talk about their experience. Their comments include: "This is the first time that I have said that out loud"; "I think I will visit my brother's grave this year"; "As we talk, I realise that ... I have just realised that now!"; "I don't know how she (i.e. mother) feels about this; maybe I should ask her". Significantly, one of the participants who initially felt that perhaps she had "said too much", subsequently reported that she had gained new insights into her experience.

While the interview itself, by its very nature of empathic and active listening, provided the necessary holding for the containment of painful emotions, I was prepared to reschedule the interview for a later date should the participant feel unable to continue. This never arose and indeed all of the participants, although very moved by the recalling of the details of their loss, were comfortable enough to continue and spoke at great length about their loss experience. The willingness, eagerness and generosity on the part of these individuals to share their stories were extraordinary. For some the silence was finally broken and it was clear from their descriptions that their stories needed to be told.

Another ethical consideration in in-depth interviewing is the question of confidentiality and anonymity. Although this aspect has been touched on in section 5.3.1 ("Research Participants"), it is necessary to emphasise that each participant was assured of confidentiality and anonymity regarding personal information obtained in the interview. In the study a pseudonym, and *not* the actual name of the research participant, has been used and all identifying information has been altered or omitted. An additional safeguard to minimise the risks related to the revelation of personal information was to

review these issues with each participant at the end of the interview and to ask them to sign the Consent Form (Form B) following the disclosure of emotional material. This was done in order to ensure that they still felt comfortable to be included in the study. Significantly, there was no hesitation on the part of any of the volunteers to sign this form.

It is perhaps also noteworthy that although none of the volunteers took up the option of a follow-up interview, two of the three participants were very interested in receiving information on the findings of the study. They were informed that this would be arranged on completion of the study.

5.4 Data Explication and Analysis

Once all the data were obtained and transcribed, the actual application of the descriptive phenomenological analyses began. Polkinghorne (1989:50) refers to the data analysis phase as the "core stage" of a phenomenological study:

"Its purpose is to derive from the collection of protocols, with their naïve descriptions and specific examples of the experience under consideration, a description of the essential features of that experience. The researcher must glean from the examples an accurate description of their contents and the particular structural relationship that coheres the elements into a unified experience".

Rahilly (1993: 60) notes that during this "scientific phase" of data explication, the researcher is required to perform a second level of bracketing, i.e. the eidetic *epoché*, where before commencing with the analysis, the researcher suspends interest in a particular protocol in order to discover the themes emerging throughout all of the protocols of the phenomenon under investigation. This is in the service of acquiring objective scientific knowledge -- a method for controlling bias and prejudice. In the process of reduction, the phenomenological researcher moves from the naïve expressive descriptions obtained, through the eidetic *epoché*, to the structural description, where naïve and diffuse knowledge is made clear through science (Polkinghorne, 1989). It is in the process of formulating explicitly what was experienced implicitly in awareness that the essential structure and constituents of the phenomenon are revealed.

The method of data analysis employed in this study follows the empirical phenomenological method as proposed by Giorgi (1975, 1985, 1989a, 1989b). Giorgi notes, however, that while concrete steps are straightforward, infinite procedural variations are possible (1989a: 72), depending on the research question and the descriptions provided by the participants. The dialectic between approach, method and content must be maintained. Thus, while the initial steps in the analysis of my data follow Giorgi's phenomenological psychological method, some modifications were necessary because of the complexity and multidimensional nature of the phenomenon of sibling loss.

Identical steps were used in the analysis of each interview and all steps took place within the phenomenological reduction. The data analysis applied to the present study followed the method as proposed by Giorgi (1975). The article by Polkinghorne (1989: 41-60) also informed the procedures that were followed in the analysis. Fischer (1974, 1989), De Koning (1979), Colaizzi (1978); Wertz (1983), Fischer and Wertz (1979), Qualls (1998), Bargdill (2000), and von Knorring-Giorgi (1998) have used similar ways of doing research and their influence is evident in the steps that follow.

5.4.1 Sense of the Whole

In the first step, the transcribed interview (i.e. the data) of each participant was read several times and the audio recordings were also closely listened to. Dwelling with the data allowed time for intuitions to develop and to gain a sense of the whole. This was done because the phenomenological psychological method is a holistic approach to inquiry. Giorgi (1985) advises the researcher neither to interrogate the descriptions nor to make explicit the general sense obtained, so as "to achieve maximum openness" (in Von Knorring-Giorgi, 1998: 38). The emphasis in this first step was on getting the self immersed in the experience of the participant; this would enable the researcher to pick up the meanings, and to discriminate natural meaning units (i.e. constituents of the experience). Colaizzi (1978: 59) speaks of acquiring a feeling for the protocols, "a making sense out of them". The reading takes place within the attitude of the phenomenological reduction (bracketing) which is maintained throughout all of the steps of the analysis. The general sense of the whole provides the basis for the following step.

5.4.2 The Emergence of Natural Meaning Units (NMU)

After obtaining a sense of the whole for each description, each protocol was read again and the transcript was divided into units or blocks (referred to as "natural meaning units"); each unit highlighted shifts in the participant's meaning as the researcher perceived these shifts. With each transition in meaning, the whole was differentiated into manageable, coherent units where the partial meanings made up the totality. While reading from the perspective of psychological interest, bracketing continued and care was taken to treat the text as a naïve and non-theoretical presentation of the participant's experience and to seek those divisions that were part of the participant's own experience. Giorgi (1975: 87) states that "the attitude with which this is done is one of maximum openness and the specific aim of the study is not yet taken into account". Polkinghorne (1989: 54) notes that "meaning units are constituents of the experience, not elements, in that they retain their identity as contextual parts of the subject's specific experience". This is further clarified by Giorgi (1985: 14) who states that "a constituent is a part determined in such a way that it is context laden. An element is a part determined in such a way that its meaning is as much as possible independent of context".

In the present study, the narrative sequence and the participants' own original language were retained in this step of the analysis. With regard to the latter, although in the actual analysis of the interviews the original description was rewritten in the third-person singular, it was felt that in order to understand and appreciate the poignancy of this loss experience, the participants' own words were more powerful and effective and were therefore retained for presentation in the thesis.

Naturally occurring meaning units were delineated in preparation for the next step of elucidating the central themes of these accounts.

5.4.3 Central Themes

After delineating meaning units, the researcher states as simply as possible the meaning that dominates each meaning unit (i.e. the central theme). This is the *first transformation* of the data from the participant's to the researcher's words. In other words, the implicit psychological aspect of each meaning unit is expressed in an explicit way in the researcher's own words. Thus, the third step involves the interrogation of each meaning unit in terms of the specific purpose of the study, i.e. its psychological significance and relevance to sibling loss, and the participant's descriptions are rephrased in simple language. Giorgi (1975: 88) notes that if there is nothing explicit about the experience under investigation within a given natural meaning unit, then the researcher leaves a blank although it may still be important to know the meaning of the statement and what function it serves in the total narrative. The relevance of the material was judged by asking, "What does this statement tell me about sibling loss?" and, "How is it lived?" This step involved "a moving away from the original fusion with the participant, taking a step back, reflecting interestedly about where the participant was, how she got there, what it meant to be there, etc." (Wertz, 1983: 205). The processes of reflection and imaginative variation were used to transform the meaning units. Thus there is a transformation of the naïve description to the psychological meaning, i.e. moving from what the subjects say to what they mean (Colaizzi, 1978: 59) in order to articulate and to clarify the *central themes* of the phenomenon, all the while staying within the realm of description and not reducing the naïve/concrete description to an interpretation. The transformation of the participants' expressions into some concept is necessary to give scientific expression to the experience, rooting it in the participant's own words but showing that it more generally fits others; in some sense fits us all. Furthermore, the researcher transforms into the language of a specific discipline - in this case, into the language of psychology. However, one might easily transform the experience of grief into the vocabulary of theology. The strength and flexibility of the phenomenological method is evident.

5.4.4 Situated Constituents

Once the themes were enumerated, the next step was to question each natural meaning unit and its theme in terms of the specific topic of the study. The question, "What is the experience of the loss of a

sibling?", was put to each meaning unit and its accompanying first transformation. This step is a *second transformation* in which an attempt is made to draw out from each unit of the protocol those aspects that are related to the topic under investigation and to re-describe these aspects in the language of psychology (in this case, the psychological terms related to loss). The essence of the situation for each participant was revealed by eliminating repetitive themes and descriptions within the meaning units that were not relevant to the sibling loss experience. The psychological statements reflect the participant's implied meaning, where what is implicitly stated in the original description is made explicit.

5.4.5 Situated Narrative Description (Situated Structure)

During this phase, the psychologically transformed meaning units from each protocol were synthesised and tied together into a descriptive statement of essential, non-redundant psychological meanings. The transformed meaning units were related to each other and to the sense of the whole protocol; the structural description continued to include the concreteness and the specifics of the situation in which the participant's loss took place. The description answers the question : "What is the psychological structure of the loss of a sibling as it presented itself to *this* participant in this *particular situation*?". The description of the Situated Structure developed for the whole protocol was then given. Integration of central themes and mutual implications into a descriptive statement formed the individual situated structure.

During this phase of the explication a departure from Giorgi's method becomes evident. Due to the richness of the material obtained in the interviews, and the complexity of the experience as it unfolded, a Situated Structure in the form of a Situated Narrative became the preferred way of reflecting the concrete, lived experience of each participant. By using the Individual Situated Narrative it became possible to contain all the constituents revelatory of the structure of sibling loss by placing these within the context in which they were embedded. The Individual Situated Narrative synthesised the threads of the story, the nuances of meanings and insights gained from previous steps, and provided an integrated psychological description of each participant's experience (on the idiographic level) of the loss of a brother or sister.

Presenting the Situated Structure in the form of a story facilitated the articulation of essential themes of the experience without breaking the flow of the description and also allowed for temporal and spatial shifts apparent in the description. The particular quality and palpable texture of the experience as a whole for each participant was captured by using a descriptive title for each individual narrative. A narrative was completed for each participant and provided the base from which the General Structural Narrative and the General Psychological Structure of all the descriptions were derived.

5.4.6 The General Structural Narrative

In the present study an additional step was introduced in order to unfold the bigger picture; the comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The question I asked the Individual Situated Narratives and other transcriptions was, "*What sequence of events and what personal meanings are present across cases*".

The reason for including the General Structural Narrative is that the empirical and therapeutic literature has paid scant attention to sibling loss in young adulthood. Part of my task, therefore, was to attempt to capture its emotional resonance, the vividness of the lived experience of sibling loss, and to provide a deeper and broader understanding of what it is like to lose a brother or sister.

The general narrative is presented in ordinary speech, everyday lived-language, and expressed in the second person. This aims to draw the reader into the immediacy of the experience with a view to enhancing awareness of this phenomenon. The narrative communicates the heart and soul of the experience. It captures its emotional resonance. It also depicts all the ambiguities that plague it. However, in terms of the present study and its aims, the narrative requires elucidation. It calls for conceptual clarification. Thus, the narrative is followed by a more formal outline of what is essential, psychologically speaking, to sibling loss. The General Structural Narrative forms the basis for the next phase of the results, i.e. the General Psychological Structure.

5.4.7 The General Psychological Structure

The general structure of sibling loss is the descriptive answer to the question: "What is the experience of sibling loss?". In this step I directly synthesised the transformed meaning units from each of the individual protocols into a general structural description. The eidetic *epoche* (second-level bracketing) was applied to allow for emerging themes while moving from the specific to a more universal validity.

Stated differently, after completing the situated descriptions I developed a single structural description at the general level (i.e. on the nomothetic level) from the protocols. "Free imaginative variation" was used to move beyond the *situated* description provided by each of the three participants to what was typical of the phenomenon, by comparing the constituents of each Situated Narrative with each of the others. At this point, I reflected on those constituents and structures that were common to all three individual situated narratives as well as any ways in which each structure could be considered a variation of the others. The results of these comparisons produced the general psychological structural description of the experience. This general description established the dynamics of the phenomenon that held true invariably across the specific experiences studied. During this step there was an attempt to allow for the emergence of themes that were common to all of the subjects' protocols

(Colaizzi, 1978: 59). *Clusters of themes* were referred back to the original protocols and direct quotes from the protocols were provided not only in order to *validate* the themes as suggested by Colaizzi (1978: 59) but also to allow the participants to take us deeper into their experience of loss (Qualls, 1998).

The general structural description centred on those aspects of the experience included in the protocol that were trans-situational or descriptive of sibling loss in general. Although the description does not claim to be of a universal structure of consciousness, it does claim a *general validity* beyond the specific situation of a particular subject. Wertz (1983: 228) writes that the general psychological structure "involves understanding diverse individual cases as individual instances of something more general and articulating this generality of which they are particular instances". He also describes the general psychological structure as a formulation of "... the necessary and sufficient conditions, constituents, and structural relations which constitute the phenomenon in general, that is, in all instances of the phenomenon under consideration" (Wertz, 1983: 235). The General Psychological Structure formed the basis for the following step.

5.4.8 Structural Synthesis

A structural synthesis of the experience of sibling loss was formulated, representing the essential constituents of the General Structure of losing a brother or sister through death.

5.4.9 Essential Structure

Finally, an essential structure was formulated that encapsulates the essence of the experience of the loss of a brother or sister in young adulthood. While this structure is applicable more specifically to sibling survivors in our Western society, it is possible that it has a more universal validity.

5.5 Concluding Comments

Valle and Halling (1989:6) allege that existential-phenomenological psychology "has become that psychological discipline which seeks to explicate the essence, structure or form of both human existence and human behaviour as revealed through essentially descriptive techniques including disciplined reflection". It is in the explication of the data analysis that the implicit meanings of the experience of sibling loss are made explicit and become scientific knowledge. In order to achieve this, Giorgi's (1975, 1989b) phenomenological approach requires that each step of the analysis takes place within the framework of the phenomenological reduction. The researcher remains faithful to each participant's description of the experience and does not attempt to translate the experience into a theoretical system. The following section will deal with the investigation and results of this study.

CHAPTER SIX

THE INVESTIGATION AND RESULTS

6.1 The Research Question

The aim of the study is to answer the question: "What is the experience of the loss of a sibling?" In order to obtain the required data, the following research question was posed:

"Would you please describe in as much detail as possible, just as the thoughts and feelings come to you, what you experienced at the loss of your brother/sister. Please focus on your feelings, on what it was like for you at the time of the loss and how you experience the loss now. Please keep in mind that there is no one right or proper way to experience this loss. I am really interested in your experience. You may take as long as you like."

6.2 The Research Participants

A reminder that for purposes of confidentiality and anonymity all the participants have been allocated pseudonyms and all identifying information has been changed or omitted.

1. Participant 1: Cathy Cathy is unmarried.
 Age: 62 years.
 Cathy lost her 19-year-old brother when she was 23 years old.
 Cause of death: Motor vehicle accident.
 Sibling status: Cathy is the second born in a family of 4 children and the only surviving child.
 Previous losses: A 3-year-old sister died during mother's pregnancy with Cathy. Later, when Cathy was two years old, her mother lost another infant (a daughter) shortly after birth. Cathy was unaware of these losses until after her 19-year-old brother's death (the last born).

2. Participant 2: Dia Dia is married and has two children.
 Age: 51 years.
 Dia lost her 25-year-old married sister when she was 21 years old.
 Cause of death: Motor vehicle accident.
 Sibling status: Dia is the younger of 2 children and the only surviving child
 Previous losses: A grandfather and the sister of a very close friend.

3. Participant 3: Elena Elena is unmarried.
 Age: 25 years.
 Elena lost her 25-year-old brother when she was 22 years old.
 Cause of death: Motor-cycle accident.
 Sibling status: Elena is the youngest of 3 children. Her remaining elder
 brother is married and does not live at home.
 Previous losses: maternal grandmother.

6.3. Data Analysis

To be included as follows:

- 6.3.1. Participant 1 : Cathy Table I Natural Meaning Units and Central Themes
 Table II Situated Constituents
 Table III Situated Narrative Description
- 6.3.2. Participant 2 : Dia Table III Situated Narrative Description
- 6.3.3. Participant 3 : Elena Table III Situated Narrative Description

Tables I and II for Dia and Elena appear in the Appendix.

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to remind the reader that the data analysis takes several forms. In this study, all the results are grounded in the narratives or portraits of the participant/subject. Results are most concrete, individualised, particular. That important act of particularising must be balanced and matched by the effort to generalise. To achieve this all the individual portraits are honed into General Psychological Structure, Structural Synthesis and Essential Structure. The words themselves - general, structural, essential - reveal the movement toward the picture that fits the three women volunteers, but also any sibling who mourns a lost brother or sister. Repetition, a regrettable consequence, should not be seen as careless redundancy that the writer was too lazy to eliminate. In point of fact, their presence demanded the most taxing labour of the write-up.

TABLE I

Participant 1: Cathy

NATURAL MEANING UNITS	CENTRAL THEMES
1. It feels like it just happened yesterday.	1. Although it has been 39 years since her brother's death, on talking about the loss, Cathy feels as though it has just happened.
2. Right I was in J. when it happened, when my brother had the accident, and I was watching a movie and they blackened the ... the ... [theatre] and they put a notice to come to the Manager's office and there was this absolute fear ... you know, that ... um ... I didn't know ... my mom and dad were in D and we'd gone over to J to see the movie by train ... and how would I get ... you know ... what was going on ... and here I am in J. and away from home and there was this absolute disbelief, you know, you can't think. Anyway, eventually I got to the office and the Manager told me that my brother had a bad accident and that friends were coming to pick me up.	2. Cathy and her brother were away from home and from their parents when the accident occurred and her immediate feelings on receiving the news that something had happened to her brother were of absolute fear, aloneness, confusion and utter disbelief, which blocked out all thought.
3. And ... the... the... the knowing that it's very serious and ... the hoping that it ... nothing was going to be as bad as ... you know ... I thought it ... And then they dropped me at the hospital and I ... I can't remember if I went in to my brother ... as I said, I run away. They brought a cushion that I sat on and I don't think that I ... still wanted to accept ... the doctor came and told me there was nothing they could do. He had damaged his liver but I <i>still</i> ... you know ... and I sort of half-slept on this couch ...	3. Although there was an awareness of the seriousness of her brother's condition, Cathy could not accept this reality and continued to hope that it was not as bad as she thought. She realises that she is inclined to avoid painful feelings and she withdrew, unable even to recall seeing her brother.
4. ... and eventually my mom and dad travelled	4. Once her parents arrived at the hospital,

<p>up from D and they arrived at the hospital and ... I don't even know what time, you know, and ... from that moment everything became sort of hazy. Ja, ja, it is as though the reality of what happened makes you, made me, feel totally ... um ... out of touch, you know, as though you ... as I say, I run ... as though you don't want to accept what has happened.</p>	<p>everything became 'hazy' and Cathy felt completely out of touch, not wanting to accept the reality of what had happened.</p>
<p>5. My mother, strangely enough, she came out and told me ... she came out and told me we must go home and then ... (wept bitterly/very upset) ... we went home ... Anyway, at some stage ... I think it must have been about 9 o'clock she came and said we've got to go to the hospital. So we quickly got dressed ...</p>	<p>5. Cathy was surprised that her mother initially responded in such a practical and matter-of-fact way, and she is overcome with emotion as she recalls her mother saying that they must go home. Later that evening they were summoned to the hospital.</p>
<p>6. They went in. I sat outside ...Mm. ... (struggling with tears) and he died while my mom and dad were in the room (weeping bitterly) ... and my mother became hysterical ...</p>	<p>6. At the hospital her parents went in to her brother while Cathy waited outside and she weeps bitterly as she relives the painful moment of her brother's death and her mother's uncontrolled expression of intense grief.</p>
<p>7. Then they came back and we went home ... What happened after that ... the going home ... I was like so cold, I can remember that.</p>	<p>7. Cathy recalls the journey home and remembers clearly that she felt extremely cold.</p>
<p>8. And there was much phoning and people coming and ... I can't remember ... anyone really coming up to me and saying: "We're so sad", you know (wept). And I don't know if it was because I withdrew or because, you know, they... the ... the ... it was my mom and dad that lost their child, you know,</p>	<p>8. Although many people called and visited the family, nobody offered Cathy their condolences and she was not sure if this was because she withdrew or because people were more aware that her parents had lost their child.</p>
<p>9. Ja and even at the funeral I can remember ... after the funeral ... it was a strange thing, you know. It was as though it was something</p>	<p>9. Even at the funeral and afterwards, Cathy was powerfully aware of her parents' incredible pain and felt strangely apart</p>

<p>that happened that was not part and parcel of me, you know. It was something that I was observing. Do you understand? It was <i>terrific</i> pain that my mum and dad had and I was observing all of this.</p>	<p>from what had happened; like a spectator observing her parents' intense sorrow.</p>
<p>10. ... and also no one really owned that I was part of the family. With the result that you think you are a bit of an outsider ... it is ... that it is those people that are pained and are so ... in sorrow, not you, and I think it becomes ... uh ... uh ... something that you ... you ... well up inside... because you don't really give yourself ... you don't really think you have the right to ... to be, you know, to be emotional about it because it is <i>their</i> son and it's <i>only</i> your brother. Do you understand what I am saying?</p>	<p>10. Cathy's sense of being outside the experience was strengthened by the fact that no one acknowledged that she was part of the grieving family. She felt like a stranger who did not own the pain and realises that she could not give herself permission to grieve, feeling that it was her parents' loss and pain, not hers. They had lost a child and he was <i>only</i> her brother.</p>
<p>11. With the result..... it was a very strange.... it still feels to me as though it's totally hazed up, you know those few weeks of it.</p>	<p>11. With the sense that she was not part of the grief, the loss assumed a surreal quality and she realises that the events immediately following her brother's death are still completely obscure.</p>
<p>12. I can remember someone. We were sitting in the ... the ... the ... I had a bedroom/ sitting-room and I was sitting there with some of my cousins and a person came in and said to me ... I can't remember the person, but I can remember the person saying to me, "I'm so sorry for you ... for losing your brother". And I think that's the only person..... (weeping bitterly).</p>	<p>12. Cathy recalls very clearly and with pain that only one person commiserated with her over the loss of her brother.</p>
<p>13 ... and you know when your [research] question(naire) came and I looked at it and I couldn't answer it, I couldn't put it on paper because it becomes such a reality ... on paper.</p>	<p>13. Cathy was unable to give a written description of her loss experience and she realises that, to this day, it remains difficult for her to confront the reality of her brother's death.</p>

<p>14. And ... but this has also given me time to think a bit exactly what actually happened, you know. How did I feel about all this and as I say, I felt like an outsider... Ja, sitting outside the whole thing but being very torn as well. And very upset.</p>	<p>14. Having time to reflect on her loss, Cathy recognises the ambiguity of her experience and realises that while she felt like an outsider, she also felt torn and deeply hurt.</p>
<p>15. I think when there is a tragedy like this each one copes with his own pain. You can't cope with your mother's pain, you can't cope with your father's. As much as you would like to, you know</p>	<p>15. Much as she wanted to alleviate her parents' suffering, Cathy felt helpless to do so and she realises that with such a tragedy each one in the family copes alone with his/her own pain.</p>
<p>16. I can remember going to bed and waking up in the morning and thinking it definitely didn't happen, you know. He is here, you know.</p>	<p>16. Cathy could not believe that her brother had died and recalls waking up with the conviction that his death had not happened, that he was still alive.</p>
<p>17. Ja, and then when the funeral was over and we tried to get back into normal life ... um ... I became ... I tried to protect them from songs that he was very fond of, you know.</p>	<p>17. Once the funeral was over and the family tried to return to "normal" life, Cathy attempted to shield her parents from familiar associations with her brother.</p>
<p>18. ... and it became a weird existence because he was so much part and parcel of our lives yet none of us acknowledged him, we never spoke about him. You know ... he ... everyday ... I mean we'd sit down to eat and we would all cry and no one would acknowledge why we were crying.</p>	<p>18. Although her brother's "presence" was palpable, no one ever mentioned him and a weird family existence ensued: they would all cry at mealtimes but no one acknowledged that they were grieving the loss.</p>
<p>19. I just remember once my mother said to us at the table, to my dad and I, um ... that we must just think what it would have been [like]... if <i>he</i> had killed someone ... because a drunk man rode into him. Ja, and it sort of ... it's a burden that at least ... he did not have to bear. And I think that was the only time that there was ever an acknowledgement about the ... about what had happened.</p>	<p>19. Cathy recalls only one occasion on which her mother spoke about the circumstances of her brother's death (accident with drunken driver), saying that if the situation had been reversed her brother would have had to bear the burden of having killed someone.</p>

<p>20. My mother on occasion became hysterical and my dad got the doctor in a few times ...</p>	<p>20. Cathy was aware of the intensity of her mother's grief, which could not always be contained, and her father had to summon the doctor on several occasions.</p>
<p>21. I ... what was I doing? I can't remember ... it really was a terribly hazy ... a time that I seldom go back and look into.</p>	<p>21. Cathy has only vague memories of what she was doing at the time of the death and realises that this was a confusing period in her life, one which she seldom revisits or reflects on.</p>
<p>22. I know I was at home and I stayed at home. I made a pact that I would stay with them for 3 years ... and I stayed for 3 years and tried to protect them.</p>	<p>22. Cathy has a clear memory of living at home and of resolving to stay with her parents for a specified period (3 years) in an attempt to protect them.</p>
<p>23. Then they started to go to the cemetery every Sunday. And it became an absolute ritual. They'd both go off. Sometimes I'd go with ... eventually I couldn't stand the emotional strain and they'd go and they'd come back. My father was losing weight, my mother was looking terrible and one day they came back and I said to my mother "This has got to stop! You're killing dad ... you're um ... you've got other things that you must look....."</p>	<p>23. Going to the cemetery, an absolute ritual for her parents, was emotionally very stressful for Cathy. She was acutely aware of her parents' emotional and physical deterioration and at one point confronted her mother angrily with the fear that this was destroying her father.</p>
<p>24. ... and she said: "I just want to tell you my favourite child died!" (very emotional/wept) ... You know when ... when you're in a situation you don't realise that's just her way of hitting back, you know ... at her pain ...I think that it was devastating..... it wasn't.....it was hurtful... it was..... When I think about it..... for many years I thought I had no worth.</p>	<p>24. Her mother's retaliation that she had lost her <i>favourite</i> child devastated and hurt Cathy deeply and for many years she felt worthless, not realising at the time that this was her mother's way of lashing out against the pain of her loss.</p>
<p>25. You see, you yourself are in ... I myself was feeling terribly ... I was scared for what was happening to them seeing them, you</p>	<p>25. Cathy was frightened and confused as she witnessed her parents' relentless grief and their deterioration, but, while the</p>

<p>know, seeing them deteriorating. I couldn't understand what was going on, because it just continued and continued and the strange thing is that after that they came right, you know. I mean they still didn't mention him , they never mentioned him, neither did my father ... um ...</p>	<p>confrontation somehow served as a force-for-change and her parents improved, they still never spoke about her brother.</p>
<p>26. And just before my father died my mother and I sat in the lounge and I spoke about him and she cried and from then we spoke about him ... that was 15 years after he died. Um ... we have never mentioned the circumstances ... um ...</p>	<p>26. It was many years (15 years) after the death, just before her father died, that Cathy finally broke the silence and spoke to her mother about her brother. Thereafter they were able to talk about him, but they have never discussed the circumstances of his death.</p>
<p>27. ... in D they bought him a little car and the car arrived as the funeral car arrived to take him. Ja, you know it was a very, very um ... um ... emotional thing and to this day I cannot look at blue M....s. They bought him a little blue M... there and as we were getting into the funeral car the driver with the blue M.... came from D and</p>	<p>27. An extremely emotional moment for Cathy was the delivery of her brother's new car that arrived just as the hearse arrived to take his body and, to this day, she avoids this painful reminder (car) of his death.</p>
<p>28. ... he was driving my mother's car. There was a lot of guilt I had in that as well because the evening that we went out he was going to go to his girl friend by bus and I said "No" and I got quite angry. "We've got to go to the station and you've got to take us" and because he took the car he had the accident and <i>that</i> caused me guilt for years ...</p>	<p>28. For many years Cathy experienced much guilt and felt responsible for her brother's death because, on that fateful evening, she had insisted that he drive her to her destination (the station) and she felt that because he used the car he had the accident.</p>
<p>29. That I worked through ... and, I mean, I never told my parents so I haven't worked through that to that extent , you know. I think to a certain extent there is still a lot of</p>	<p>29. Cathy believes that she has worked through her guilt but realises that she still blames herself for what happened that night as she has never discussed this with her parents.</p>

<p>guilt wrapped up in him having been in the car ... um....</p>	
<p>30. ... But I think you've got to let go as well, you know, can't live ... As I had to eventually let go of you know ... I knew my brother was my mother's favourite child, you know, she was very protective of him. He was very much like her family and he'd had a car accident before that and was in hospital for ... um ... [She worried more about] ... about him than she did about me. Yes.</p>	<p>30. Cathy realises that in order to move on with her life she has to let go of the guilt just as she eventually let go of the hurt of knowing that her brother was her mother's special child.</p>
<p>31. She used me in many ways, I think. She was a very hard woman, I think ... I didn't realise at that stage that she had had so many ... ja! (losses) Ja, and she was very, very hard on me. My dad also always said that "just keep quiet you keep the peace", but when I was a child I didn't understand this. And the fact that she was pregnant with me when it happened to my sister then it's resentment towards me ... on her part ... that's how I worked it out, you know, and I think it made it easier for me to cope with what happened when I was young ... You know, as I ... you know ... it actually was a very strange relationship, my mom and I. Now that she...she's 90 now, she's mellowed tremendously yet she was always very, very hard on me, she ... never on my brother ... it was a strange thing ...</p>	<p>31. In the relationship with her mother, Cathy felt her alienating resentment and experienced her mother as very hard on her, never on her brother. As a child this confused her, but later when she realised that her mother had suffered other losses, she was able to make sense of her mother's resentment, and of her father's protectiveness towards her mother, and this made it easier to cope with.</p>
<p>32. but I don't think you can ... you know, you must worry, 'why?'. No ... I just ... lately I just thought, well that was the way it was and you just got to accept and just get on with it. As I say her ... <i>her</i> bereavement</p>	<p>32. Although Cathy remains acutely aware that her mother's unresolved grief over previous losses had a profound impact on her self-confidence, she believes that searching for reasons for her mother's behaviour is futile,</p>

<p>which I was not part and parcel of had a tremendous effect on <i>my</i> confidence</p>	<p>and she has recently decided that she must accept what was existentially there and move on with her life.</p>
<p>33. ... and going back to how I feel about ... I still think ... I still grieve about him ... as he was when he died ... a young man, you know, and he was a very good-looking young man. I don't know how I feel now ... um</p>	<p>33. Cathy still grieves over her brother and remembers him as the attractive young man that he was when he died. She remains frozen in the past and is uncertain about the meaning of her loss in the present.</p>
<p>34. ... Every morning, you know, you wake up and think it couldn't have, you know, he must be here. That not wanting to accept it. Ja, I actually don't know when acceptance came. I think for a long time after he died I'd wake up and think he's still ... and I'd hear him whistle. He loved um ... um ... um ... motorbikes ... not motorbike(s) ... bicycle(s) ... um ... he'd go on these bicycles ... racing bicycles, in groups with the other chaps and um ... it um ... you know, there are still certain sounds that one still remembers.</p>	<p>34. Cathy could not accept her brother's death and is unsure when acceptance came, but she recognises that for a long time after he died she would wake up and think that he was still alive; she would hear the familiar sounds that she associated with him and that she remembers so clearly to this day.</p>
<p>35. ...I don't think you can ... like my father died and you don't lose [the memories]... sometimes it dims and then other times the things that you can't remember you remember very well again, you know. I think it depends on the normal mental state or your emotional state perhaps. You want to remember and what you don't, you don't. And ...um ... and ... Ja, ja they... they ... I can still remember that feeling of waking up and thinking it didn't ... it didn't happen ... that it was a dream ... you know, and not wanting to accept ...</p>	<p>35. Cathy realises that one does not lose the memories of a significant other but that one vacillates between remembering and forgetting, depending on one's emotional state and whether one wants to remember or not. She recognises this dialectic in her feeling of not wanting to accept the reality of her brother's death and in her firm belief, on waking up, that what had happened was nothing more than a dream.</p>
<p>36. [the reality] You know, I don't know. I</p>	<p>36. The suddenness of her brother's death made</p>

<p>think it took time ... even the ... I think they left the coffin open in the church. I think it was done purposely so that the reality could hit us. You know when someone is ill and ... when my father died he was ill for some time ... and ... and ... Ja, that prepares you, but when ... and I think ... there it hit ... home. That ... here he was ... and I think that is why it was done. I don't know who decided that it should be. Perhaps the family did, you know, my mother's sisters ... and ... saw that the acceptance wasn't, you know, there. I don't know but normally all funerals we went to the coffins are closed and I think perhaps the reality hit there ... that it's over. But still ... I can still remember long after the funeral waking up and thinking it definitely didn't happen, you know, that he's here ... and then listening for the noises he used to make in the morning ...</p>	<p>acceptance very difficult and, while the reality that it was over did strike Cathy when she saw her brother's body lying in the open coffin, full realisation of this reality came over time and she can still remember, long after the funeral, waking and thinking that it did not happen and listening for the sounds that her brother used to make.</p>
<p>37. It's a ... bereavement is a strange thing ... it's ... you can't picture the moment ... I think each one ... and I often wonder in small children what happens there Ja, ja there isn't that ... that (understanding) ... that's very interesting isn't it? I think the pain of the whole situation that it's a closed thing, there's no longer that person, you don't want to accept and you actually ... in ... you look ahead at the pain that is lying ahead, do you understand, and that not wanting to accept ... that you think it hasn't happened.....it couldn't have happened, so that you don't have to go</p>	<p>37. Cathy recognises that grief is not a moment in time that can be captured and contained in the present. She expresses concern for young children who do not understand what is happening but paradoxically realises that for her the conflict between acceptance and non-acceptance arose through the painful awareness that death was final, of looking towards a future without her brother and wanting to avoid experiencing all the pain again.</p>

through all that	
<p>38. ... the strange thing as well that I thought ... I've often thought about it. It never came up in my mind that why did God do this? Ja, you know it ... I never ... perhaps I was blaming myself more than God ...</p>	<p>38. Cathy finds it strange that in her search to understand the loss, it never occurred to her to blame God for what had happened and, on reflection, she realises that perhaps she held herself more responsible for the loss.</p>
<p>39. You know it is like a whirlpool of all kinds of things ... and ... after, after it sort of happened little things would come up, you know, they'd surface a bit and then they'd vanish in the water again, that type of thing, and one's ability to cope later when they appear a little longer, you know, and before you suppress it again and hide whatever you're feeling..... You can deal with it a little bit and then off it goes again ... you close it up ... it um ...</p>	<p>39. For Cathy, bereavement was like a whirlpool with different emotions surfacing and then vanishing again only to reappear for a slightly longer period at a later stage, challenging her ability to cope with more before she suppressed and concealed whatever she was feeling. She realises that she could deal with the feelings for only a short time before closing them up again.</p>
<p>40. ... and I often wonder ... perhaps it is because I am inclined to run ... from emotional ... in anything you know, on T.V, you know ... I switch ... and as a child I used to cry in movies that other people never cried And I think that when you're like that you try and escape and I think that feeling was always with me. I can remember after 3 years I went to teach at X (School) and I never ... I ... thought perhaps I would escape it. I never had that feeling, you know, I just knew I was going. I took everything that was at home with me. The thought of getting away from it never entered my mind. I just knew that for my health and for my <i>emotional</i> survival I had to get away from home ... and at this stage I was 25, 26 ... I went to X (School) ... Yes, it all went with me. It was like I packed it in</p>	<p>40. Although Cathy is aware of her tendency to avoid painful situations, she never considered the possibility of escaping the pain of her loss when she finally left home (after 3 years). While she was aware that for her physical and emotional wellbeing she simply had to get away from home, she could not escape the pain of the loss and all the emotions went with her as though she had packed them in her suitcase.</p>

the suitcase..... The emotions, the ...	
<p>41. I also have a little parcel of his with ... with his watch, and ... but I've never opened it. It's still there, it's still closed I move with it wherever I go and ... and ... you know ... as I say, <i>running ... running ...</i></p>	<p>41. Cathy acknowledges that she has a parcel containing some of her brother's belongings that travels with her wherever she goes but which remains unopened. She is aware that she is still trying to evade the pain of the loss.</p>
<p>42. You know I don't even know when he died, isn't it terrible?. It's a strange ... as you said, or as I said, it's not accepted ... the reality. Perhaps ... I mean I used to go, even after my dad died, my mother and I used to go to the cemetery and we'd put flowers on my brother's grave, on my dad's grave and my little sister's grave, the one that died. I mean I must have looked at the grave stone a thousand times and cleaned it and I still don't know when he died ... I think ...</p>	<p>42. Cathy feels very distressed that she cannot remember when her brother died even though she has seen his gravestone "a thousand times". She believes that this "not knowing" is part of not wanting to accept the reality of his death.</p>
<p>43. ... And yet he was much younger than I was. We were never ... just about a year before he died we started becoming friends ... He was also younger ... and ... on ... on looking back, we had very little in common. We did very little together. I was always the older one, I was always playing the piano and he had other things. He was ...</p>	<p>43. While the loss had a tremendous impact on her, Cathy acknowledges that she and her brother had never shared many interests or activities and that they only started becoming friends about a year before he died.</p>
<p>44. ... he also had a friend who shot himself when he was at High School ... life is so ... whew! ... He was at boarding school, my brother, and we didn't tell him ... my mother didn't tell him, and when he came back my mother told him. He was then also in Std 6. And he just turned round and he walked out. Strange that no one ever asked him ... how he felt. We were never asked</p>	<p>44. Through recalling an incident where her brother suffered the traumatic loss of a friend and where nobody in the family discussed the death with him, Cathy realises that even before her brother's loss, her parents never spoke about feelings or asked them how they felt.</p>

<p>you know ... it was ... a ... a ... I don't think my dad ever spoke to him ... or my mother ... about it ... he ... I can't even remember my mother telling him why we thought he did it.</p>	
<p>45. As I say, I think on looking back, bereavement counselling would have helped a lot, you know. But now even you doing your PhD on this I've often thought, "I wonder how parents would take to a child going for counselling". You know it's also still very much a new area, this counselling thing . They <i>counsel</i> children that have emotional problems but they don't regard <i>a loss</i> as a counselling problem. You know, I see this at school as well you know there are two little ... one little girl and ... both parents were killed in a helicopter accident, and I said to the school the other day, she's now gone to P : "Is she receiving counselling?", and they said no they don't think so. And I looked and I thought ... to me it's become such an important ... you know ... after having gone to Lifeline and realising what it <i>did</i> do and I think if people become more aware of counselling and, as you are working on, for children as well. Children need help because it is very traumatic, you know</p>	<p>45. Reflecting on her own loss experience, Cathy realises how traumatic loss can be, and she has become very aware of the needs of children and of the importance of bereavement counselling for children as well as for adults. Having experienced the benefits of counselling herself, Cathy feels that parents and others should become more aware of the value of counselling in situations of loss and not only when the child has emotional-behavioural problems.</p>
<p>46. I ran ... my whole life I ran away. I think circumstantial death like that is... is ... is a terribly hard thing to come to terms with. I could see it in my mother as well. My father died years after my brother and there was acceptance but in a death like that ... sudden ... and of a child as well, you know,</p>	<p>46. Based on her own experience and on her observation of her mother's grief, Cathy becomes aware that it is harder to come to terms with a sudden death of a young person than with the death of an older person, and she realises that this also contributed to her reluctance to accept her</p>

<p>of a young person ... You accept when someone is older and has had a life and you don't accept ... And I think that was also a part. Well it's harder and I didn't want to accept ...</p>	<p>brother's death and to her tendency to run away from this reality all her life.</p>
<p>47. I ... Do you know, I ... I often ... he was quite a bit younger. I think he was 5 years younger and my interests were totally different to him. I actually can't even remember ... at school ... I can remember him going to school. He went to Y... (primary school) and then he went to boarding school and ... I remember him as a young man, not so much as a child. I remember him as a young man.</p>	<p>47. Cathy has few childhood memories of her brother, as he was some 5 years younger than her, their interests were totally different and they did not consistently share the same space. However, she remembers him well as a young man.</p>
<p>48. I think my mother was always very protective of him and she sort of kept ... um ... each one had his own little world, you know. I can't remember ever going to flick ... him coming with us to flick.</p>	<p>48. Cathy experienced her mother as always very protective of her brother and this differential treatment of her and her brother also kept them separate. Each lived in his/her own little world.</p>
<p>49. I went to boarding school in Std 6 and he stayed at home. Then he must have been in Std 3?, 4?, 2?. Then after Std 6 I came home. You know, he was there. He was there at supper and we got into serious trouble if we weren't home in time for afternoon tea, you know. There were times that I remember he was there but I can't remember ... ever being really close ... until he grew to a young man ... until he was about 17 - 18 then we started chatting and ... and I started picking him up wherever he was in the afternoon in the car ...I suppose it was normal. I never really...</p>	<p>49. Although Cathy and her brother were never really close as they were growing up, she began to draw closer to him when he was a young man (17-18 years) and they began to interact more.</p>
<p>50. He was very quiet, he had a very dry sense of humour ... um ... I don't know, he</p>	<p>50. Cathy experienced her brother as being more like her father in nature than like her</p>

<p>definitely wasn't like my mother. He didn't have my mother's nature ... but I think he was like her family ... although I don't know... because my father, he had more my father's nature.</p>	<p>mother.</p>
<p>51. My mother ... um ... after he died she'd make remarks to me that, "you're not a C ... you're a M" ... you know, in a very nasty way, and [that] my brother was a C ... And I have a cousin in T whose surname is C ... and she said, "He's not a C ... he's more like his mother!" you know (laughed).</p>	<p>51. After her brother's death, her mother distinguished between Cathy and her brother by identifying him with her side of the family and almost contemptuously relegating Cathy to the "other" side.</p>
<p>52. But she developed a sort of a ... after I was born I think she had a resentment towards me and it came out even after my brother died and I think that made me even more ... feel even more guilty that my brother had died. You know that she had lost the one that she was fondest of ... that she became very peculiar</p>	<p>52. Cathy believed that her mother resented her from birth and this revealed itself more clearly after her brother died and left her feeling more guilty that her mother had lost her most cherished child, and that she became so unstable.</p>
<p>53. ... and looking back I realise that it was emotional instability ... I mean, you lose 3 children you can't be absolutely normal can you?. I don't think so and I think I experienced it. You <i>cannot</i>.... And ... but as she's grown older ... I think she's ... let me tell you she was hard until she was about 85. Only now between 85 and 90 has she mellowed and I think that it was also her way of sorrowing.</p>	<p>53. In retrospect Cathy realises that having lost three children to death, her mother could not be expected to be emotionally stable and she begins to understand that her mother's extremely harsh behaviour towards her may have been her mother's way of coping with her grief.</p>
<p>54. You know, I think when you lose a brother or a sister ... you know, after your question came, I thought if someone had counselled me on my mother's behaviour, I think that would have been a tremendous help ...</p>	<p>54. To this day, Cathy regrets that she did not receive any professional support which she believes would have been of great value to her in helping her to understand her mother's behaviour.</p>
<p>55. ... because you fight in the dark, you know,</p>	<p>55. For years Cathy struggled with her pain</p>

<p>you have this person that is your <i>mother</i> that is reacting so <i>abnormally</i> towards you and you don't know why. And here you are, you're battling with all this pain and there's no help. And it went on after his death for years. As I say only 85 she was still saying to me ... about 86 ... that I'm not a C--- and she would say it in such a nasty way, you're a M---, meantime I was so proud that I was a M---, but she....she ... you know, she had to break that down. Really she became ...</p>	<p>and there was no support. Her mother's hurtful comments and atypical reactions confused and hurt her, and she felt that she was fighting a lonely battle in the dark.</p>
<p>56. ... and <i>that</i> I think is a very, very important aspect of [the loss] ... the mother's reaction towards the child ... the children that stay behind, <i>that</i> perhaps is even more important than how the child feels about the loss . To me, I think it meant ... because it became an abnormal situation.</p>	<p>56. Cathy believes that the atypical relationship with her mother played a significant part in her loss experience and she feels that a mother's reaction towards the remaining child(ren) is even more important than how the sibling feels about the loss of a brother or sister.</p>
<p>57. If someone had helped <i>her</i> and helped <i>me</i>. Perhaps even after my sister's death if someone had helped her <i>then</i>. But my mother's a very proud person and ... I think <i>that</i> in many ways caused a lot of extra pain ...</p>	<p>57. Cathy believes that it would have been helpful if she and her mother could have had some support and if someone could have helped her mother even after her first loss, but she is aware that her mother is a very stubborn person and that this caused a lot of additional pain.</p>
<p>58. ... <i>with</i> the loss and the guilt and everything else that came with the death of my brother ... her very strange behaviour ... Um ... and of course you don't realise that because you yourself are destroyedI mean I was destroyed after that ... emotionally,</p>	<p>58. Cathy herself was emotionally shattered by the loss, but with all the pain and the guilt, she also had to endure her mother's strange behaviour which she did not initially understand.</p>
<p>59. You know what else happened? Our friends couldn't cope with our sorrow so they stayed away. So here I was left as an only child and all my friends were running</p>	<p>59. In addition, their friends could not cope with their grief and avoided the family. Now the only child, Cathy felt very alone; rejected by her mother and abandoned by</p>

<p>away. No one ever discussed.... They'd say to you : "Have your parents got over the death of your brother?", you know that sort of thing and um..... there was no one that I could talk to ... um ... or ... and even tell about my mother's behaviour.</p>	<p>her friends, she had no one to talk to or to share her concerns about her mother's behaviour.</p>
<p>60. Sorry, it [i.e. mother's behaviour] was strange before my brother died. Ja, it was already.... As I say she was a bit unbalanced ... quite unbalanced, before my brother died ... um ... and I think it was all wrapped up with my sister's death and ... um ... I never even knew that I had a sister that had died. I can remember looking through a photo album and saying "Who's this?" and my mother saying: "Oh, it's just a child, a cousin", or something. Never telling me that that is your sister. So she was also running you know and ... and ... trying really ... and you know you don't shake off that baggage. It goes with you. Her baggage went with her and my baggage was mine.</p>	<p>60. Cathy experienced her mother as unbalanced even before her brother died and she believes that this was linked to the loss of another child, a sister of whom Cathy had no knowledge, as the family never spoke about the death. She realises that her mother was also trying to escape from her pain but that her "baggage" went with her just as Cathy's "baggage" stayed with her.</p>
<p>61. I think it has [strengthened me]. I hope it has made me a nicer person and not embittered me like it did to my mother.</p>	<p>61. Cathy believes that her loss experience has strengthened her, and hopes that it has made her a nicer person and not embittered her as it did her mother.</p>
<p>62. You know she became terribly possessive of my father. It was very strange. At times I thought she <i>hated</i> me ... um ...</p>	<p>62. After the loss, her mother held on to Cathy's father and there were moments when Cathy believed that her mother "<i>hated</i>" her.</p>
<p>63. Lately it doesn't worry me (laughed). I think as I've grown older ... and that is what I am saying, not only does the child encounter the loss of the ... but the mother <i>reacts</i> in strange ways to the loss of a child</p>	<p>63. With time, Cathy has become less troubled by her mother's behaviour towards her but she remains acutely aware that with the death of a child the sibling not only loses a brother or sister but that the mother also</p>

<p>and I think it is so important that the child be counselled to that as well ... to that part of the circumstances that come after</p>	<p>reacts in strange ways to the loss and she recognises the need for counselling the surviving child for the situations that follow the loss as well.</p>
<p>64. I don't even think that the parents even realise that the child also has pain ... I mean at no time would it ever ... the only time, when we sat at dinner, that my mother acknowledged that we were all hurting ... I think she acknowledged that my father was hurting.</p>	<p>64. Although her mother acknowledged that Cathy's father was hurting, she only once admitted that they were <i>all</i> hurting, and Cathy believes that parents are not even aware that the sibling is also grieving.</p>
<p>65. I have anger towards my mother. I don't have anger towards what happened. I have sadness. I am sad about what happened but I am not angry... but I <i>am</i> angry with my mother. Her reaction and her insensitive behaviour towards me and I think that is why I never ever told her that I told him to use the car. Because as it was I was <i>suffering</i> her behaviour and I could never ... relate that ...</p>	<p>65. Cathy feels only sadness, not anger, about the loss of her brother, but she is angry with her mother for her hurtful reactions and insensitivity, which, she believes, prevented her from speaking about the thing that most worried her: her guilt surrounding the circumstances of her brother's death.</p>
<p>66. I couldn't tell anyone until I went to Lifeline. You know they don't counsel. You just talk and then off you go home and you battle it out, you know. Ja. It brought it out and for the first time I could say that I felt so guilty and that ... they asked: "what actually did the guilt do to you?", and I think ...you know, I don't know ...</p>	<p>66. Cathy held on to her secret, totally alone in her feelings and unable to share this with anybody. It was only when she went for counselling that she could express openly for the first time the deep sense of guilt that she carried and could reflect on the impact that this emotion had on her.</p>
<p>67. It's such a ... death is such a tricky ... and the sorrow that comes with it ... it's many faceted. It isn't just <i>sorrow</i> ... ja, ja, there's so many aspects to sorrow and as I said it's like a whirlpool something comes up then ... whew! It's away, and then a few months later, or a few years later, something else</p>	<p>67. Cathy experienced death as deceptive and the grief that accompanied her loss as multifaceted. It was not only sorrow, but rather like a whirlpool of different emotions and thoughts that surfaced and disappeared unexpectedly over a long period of time.</p>

<p>pops up, and um</p>	
<p>68. I think ... if I look back as to how I feel about my brother's death, it was a great loss for my parents, not for me. It ... I don't think it was ... I ever acknowledged that I had the right to cry ... or I had to feel sorry for ... because I was alive, do you understand? Here I am alive, how can I feel sad? They must feel sad because they've lost ... do you understand? They've lost a child, you ... you ... I was ... and I think after it happened I went into that hazy world of ... of... you're not allowed to be sorrowful because you're alive and it's their child that died not yours, do you understand?</p>	<p>68. Reflecting on the meaning of the loss of her brother, Cathy concludes that it was a tremendous loss for her parents because they had lost a child. She realises that she never owned the loss or gave herself permission to be sorrowful, assuming that because she had not lost a child and because she was alive, she was not entitled to grieve or to be unhappy.</p>
<p>69. Do you know that on my brother's gravestone ... (very emotional – long pause) ... on my brother's gravestone ... (weeping bitterly and struggling to express her intense emotions) ... I've never, ever said this ... on my brother's gravestone, it says ... "our son". I was there shortly after he died when we were washing the gravestone and I saw then, "our son" and I put it away, you know, just filed it away ... and it has just come up now ...</p>	<p>69. Initially Cathy was hurt when she noticed that her relationship to her brother was excluded from the inscription on his tombstone. The lack of acknowledgement of the very existence of the brother-sister relationship wounded her but she pushed the hurt aside and only now realises how deeply painful this exclusion was for her.</p>
<p>70. Ja, ja. No one ever sympathised or asked me how I felt or ... perhaps they did and then I closed up, I don't know, you know. You ... You ... I think you cope with it the best you can and perhaps ... but I cannot remember anybody, barring that person that came up after the funeral. I remember <i>that</i> very clearly so I'm sure I would have remembered other things. I think, you</p>	<p>70. Others outside the family did not acknowledge Cathy's loss and while she is uncertain whether or not she withdrew, she is very aware that apart from the one person who approached her after the funeral, nobody else asked her how she felt or commiserated with her. She sensed that people outside their bereavement could not cope with their grief and consequently</p>

<p>know, I always got the feeling that people <i>outside</i> your sorrow couldn't cope with ...so what they did they avoid eventually and I always put it down to that - that they can't cope so (they avoid). But the fact that I could remember that one person at the funeral coming I'm sure no one else did otherwise I would have remembered it.</p>	<p>avoided the family.</p>
<p>71. But there was ... um ... I think there was an awareness of my sorrow but no acknowledgement ... not my mother or even my father. I think perhaps they were, I don't know, I'm just saying perhaps they were so involved in their sorrow that um ... my ... I do know I was outside the whole ... I was an onlooker.</p>	<p>71. Although Cathy believes that there may have been an awareness of her sorrow, neither her mother nor her father actually acknowledged her grief and she felt outside the whole experience: an observer, an "onlooker".</p>
<p>72. I experienced the attention being on me. Ja my mother's total absorption with me ... but not my father. My father was a very sensible man. I mean he also lost three children. But my mother became totally absorbed in ... and there I think if they had been counselled, if someone had told them how to handle it instead of becoming frightened of it and running away from it as well and in many ways becoming obstinate ... It became a ... I don't know. I often thought perhaps she was fearful that something would happen to me but she never expressed it. I perceived it as a mother that is over possessive. That's how I felt about it. She never gave me freedom to express opinions or express ideas that ... she was totally irrational ... before my brother died ... (and got worse after his death) Yes. She became ... um ... and then</p>	<p>72. After the loss, Cathy experienced her mother's attention focused entirely on her and felt bound by her controlling and possessive behaviour, which deprived Cathy of the freedom to be herself. Although her father, who had also suffered three losses, remained very reasonable, her mother's behaviour vacillated considerably and Cathy believes that, had her parents received counselling, they might not have been frightened and tried to escape from the pain.</p>

<p>at other times ... you know it wasn't a permanent type of thing. At times she was normal and other times she was totally irrational.</p>	
<p>73. And my father was fully aware that there was this but we never really discussed. I knew he knew and that made me feel safe, you know, the fact that he was aware of it, but we never discussed "why?". He was aware because of her behaviour. (He could see) and he'd wink at me or ... he'd, you know, he'd try ... I had a terrific relationship with him ... If it wasn't for him I think I would have... it was very, very trying after my brother died.</p>	<p>73. Cathy valued the close relationship with her father and the silent understanding that they shared, and she realises that the fact that she knew that he was aware of what she was going through with her mother made her feel safe and helped her through this very difficult time.</p>
<p>74. She became vicious. I think she used me as a sort of a hitting ... like a boxer hits at something and she could verbally hit. It was very destructive, that's all I know. But also ... it was destructive in as much that, as I said to you earlier, I felt I had no worth.</p>	<p>74. Cathy felt that her mother used her as a target at which she directed her anger. Like a boxer lashing out, her mother's vicious verbal attacks were very destructive and left Cathy feeling worthless.</p>
<p>75. I ... only these last few years that I felt ... I am free of ... of ... to a certain extent confined ... whole thing put on me. As though I'm starting to be my own person, not ... trying to be someone else's person.....</p>	<p>75. It is only very recently (last few years) that Cathy has been able to overcome the burden of responsibility and the constraints imposed on her to be someone else, and she has started to become her own person.</p>
<p>76. There was very little discussion. As I say, 15 years we never mentioned his name and each one has developed into his own little cocoon. I think my father took his sorrow into his little cocoon and my mother into hers. And there was never any open talk or ... how we felt or ... you know, and I often wondered, do other families behave like that?</p>	<p>76. For 15 years there was scant discussion of the death, never any talk of their feelings, and the taboo of her brother's name remained. Cathy realises that they all withdrew into their own cocoon, each one dealing with his or her own sorrow.</p>

<p>77. But I do think there is a link between your health and sorrow.</p>	<p>77. Cathy believes that there is a relationship between one's physical wellbeing and bereavement.</p>
<p>78. I think it became a very low...um... intellectual period; a period where I cannot remember anything happening. It was a stagnant period. Um...[For] Years. I think a lot of this had to do with my self-image. If you got a self-image... a good self-image, then your growth is faster. If you have a bad self-image...that's how I worked it out...you know, now that we're thinking about it. I've always felt that I am not capable of much because of ... and I never even thought about it, you know!</p>	<p>78. After the loss, Cathy felt stuck and immobilised and did not achieve much. For many years, she believed that she was incapable of doing anything and in retrospect she realises that this was related to her negative sense of self that inhibited her growth.</p>

TABLE II
Participant 1: Cathy

Constituents of the Individual Situated Structure of the Loss of a Sibling

1. Lingering Sadness (1,33,65)

For Cathy, the primacy of the experience of the loss of her brother is so present to her that many years (39 years) after his death she still feels as though it has just happened. She still thinks about, and grieves over her brother as he was when he died, and the *sadness* over the loss *lingers*.

2. Fear, Confusion, Disbelief and Withdrawal (2,3,4,5,6,7)

The reality of her brother's accident rips Cathy from her familiar world and throws her into a state of absolute *fear, confusion and disbelief* which blocks out rational thought. She and her brother are far from home and she feels very alone, frightened and confused. Despite medical confirmation that her brother's injuries are fatal, Cathy holds on to the hope that her brother will recover, and resists accepting the seriousness of his condition and the reality of what has happened. She experiences a sense of unreality and *withdraws*, unable even to remember whether she went in to see her brother or not. Once her parents arrive at the hospital, her mother takes charge and Cathy withdraws even further from the dreadful reality. Her absence from her brother's bedside (sits outside his room) when he dies, goes unnoticed and Cathy experiences the loss through her mother's uncontrolled and agonised expression of grief. On the journey home, Cathy's body yields to the reality of the death and the loss is experienced somatically; as an extreme coldness. However, her grief remains unexpressed and frozen.

3. Outsider-Observer (8,9,10,11,12,14,68,69,70,71)

Shortly after her brother's death, and even at the funeral and later, Cathy experiences the loss as something that is not part of her. In the awareness of her parents' intense pain, she feels strangely apart from what has happened, like an *outsider* who is simply *observing* her parents' profound sorrow. In addition, she is painfully aware that her loss is largely ignored by others. Recognising her own tendency to withdraw from painful situations, Cathy questions whether it was because she withdrew or because others were more in touch with her parents' loss of their child. The suddenness of the death, compounded by the absence of any acknowledgement that she too was hurting, gives a quality of unreality to the loss, and Cathy feels outside the whole experience. Her sense of being an outsider is strengthened by the fact that, apart from one person at the funeral who commiserated with her, no one else acknowledges that she is part of the grieving family. She feels that she does not own the grief, assuming that it is her parents' loss and not hers. Feeling excluded, Cathy cannot give herself permission to grieve openly. She conceals her pain believing that she is not entitled to be sad. Feelings of being an outsider-observer exacerbate her sense of unreality and memories of events following the death become completely obscure and vague ("hazy").

Later, the exclusion of her relationship from the inscription on her brother's tombstone (only "Our Son" was recorded) adds to her sense of not being part of the grief; it was her parents' son that had died, while he was "*only*" her brother. Cathy feels deeply wounded by this omission but pushes her hurt aside. Although she believes that there may have been an awareness of her sorrow, neither her mother nor her father actually acknowledge her loss and she continues to feel outside the whole experience, an "onlooker". However, recent reflection clarifies for Cathy the ambiguity of her lived experience and she realises that, while she felt like an outsider, she simultaneously felt torn and deeply hurt.

4. Evading the Reality of the Loss (13,16,21,27,34,35,36,37,41,42,46)

Feelings of unreality and disbelief persist for a long time after the death and Cathy *evades the reality of the loss*. It becomes a very "hazy" period, one that she seldom revisits or reflects on. She is aware of her natural inclination to escape ("run away") from painful situations and, while the objective reality, that it was "all over", does strike home when she sees her brother's body in the open coffin, emotionally she continues to resist accepting the loss. She struggles with memories of the past and the anticipation of the pain that lies ahead in the future, and cannot accept the finality of death.

For a long time after the funeral, Cathy's way of living the loss is by trying to avoid the full force of the pain and to recover the pre-loss state. She recalls waking up every morning with the conviction that the death had not occurred, listening for the sounds that her brother used to make, believing that it was all a "dream"; that her brother was still "here", alive. She represses significant detail relating to her brother's death but realises that she does not lose the memories, and that the vacillation between remembering and forgetting depended on her emotional state and whether she wanted to remember or not. Cathy recognises that this dialectic - the "not remembering"/"not knowing" is also part of her "not wanting" to accept her brother's death. It distresses her that even though she has seen her brother's gravestone many times, she still cannot remember when he died. Her difficulty in confronting the reality of the loss of her brother is amplified by the fact that his death was sudden, premature and potentially avoidable.

Cathy recognises that acceptance and full realisation of the loss came over time but, to this day, she is still haunted by certain sights and sounds that she associates with her brother and that remain a constant and painful reminder of the past. She continues to avoid certain objects (car) that remind her of her brother's death, and also has a parcel of his belongings that travels with her wherever she goes but which remains unopened. Cathy realises that she is still trying to evade the pain of the loss.

5. The Desire to Protect Parents (15,17,20,22)

After the funeral, as the family attempts to return to everyday living, Cathy resolves (makes a “pact”) to continue living at home (for 3 years) in order to *protect* her *parents*. In the *desire* to shield them from the pain and to maintain the existing family integrity, she tries to eliminate painful reminders of her deceased brother from the immediate environment. Fear, confusion and helplessness arise as Cathy witnesses her mother's unremitting grief, which cannot always be contained. In time, Cathy realises that, much as she would like to, she cannot take away her parents' pain, and that with such a tragedy each one has to cope with his or her own sorrow.

6. The Conspiracy of Silence (18,19,26,31,44,59,60,76)

With the loss, a cloak of *silence* descends upon the family. Living with the haunting presence of her brother, Cathy experiences the family's existence as extremely strange. Although their shared grief is visible, no one acknowledges her brother's "existence" or speaks about him and the fact that they are mourning. Her mother only once mentions the accident but there is no open discussion about the loss or about the circumstances of her brother's death. Neither Cathy nor her parents ever mention his name or speak about their feelings and they all withdraw into themselves, each dealing with his or her own grief. Unable to cope with the family sorrow, others outside their grief also avoid them, maintaining the *conspiracy of silence* and Cathy is painfully aware of being very alone in her feelings. She holds on to her pain, unable to talk about her feelings to anybody.

Many years (fifteen years) after her brother's death, the anticipated death of her father reactivates the pain of her brother's death and Cathy finally breaks the silence and speaks to her mother about her brother for the first time. After that they are able to talk about him but they still never mention the circumstances of the death. Based on an incident where her brother had experienced the traumatic loss of a friend (to suicide), Cathy realises that, even before the loss of her brother, death was taboo within the family and that her parents never spoke about the subject or asked them (i.e. the children) how they felt. Later, Cathy relates the family's silence surrounding death to previous family losses (2 other children) which had been shrouded in secrecy and of which Cathy had been totally unaware. She realises that her parents were always afraid of death and avoided any talk about the subject.

7. Guilt and Self-Blame (24,28,29,30,38,52,65,66)

For many years, Cathy experienced a deep sense of *guilt* and felt responsible for the death of her brother. Since she had insisted that he use the car on the night of the accident, she assumed the *blame*. Her sense of being-to-blame was so deep-seated that she never even considered questioning God or "why" he had allowed this to happen. Cathy blamed herself for the loss of her brother, she blamed herself for her parents' loss, for their incredible pain and for her mother's instability.

Central to the guilt was her tacit understanding that she was the less favoured child; the "outsider" in her mother's eyes. Her mother's open admission that she had lost her favourite child, something that Cathy had always "known" but which had never before been openly expressed, wounded her deeply and for many years she felt that she had no worth. In the knowledge that her mother had lost her most cherished child, Cathy's sense of guilt is amplified and this prevents her from talking about the loss or disclosing the circumstances of her brother's death. To talk about this might open her to accusations or further verbal attacks from her mother, whose intense grief knows no bounds. She holds on to her secret, unable to share this with anybody.

It is only when she goes for counselling that Cathy is able to confront the truth of what lay inside her for so long; only then is she able to say how responsible ("guilty") she really feels about her brother's death. Confronting the reality and depth of her guilt is a painful and lonely experience, but she succeeds in working through the guilt to a certain extent. Although she still feels responsible for the loss of her brother, Cathy realises that she has to let go of the guilt and move on with her life.

8. Parents' Bereavement (23,25,31,32,51,52,53,54,55,56,62,63,72,74,75,77,78)

- *Visiting the Cemetery (23,25)*

Going to the *cemetery*, an absolute ritual for her parents, became extremely stressful for Cathy and gradually she withdrew. She herself was in a terrible state after the loss and was deeply concerned about her parents whose grief continued unabated. With each visit to the cemetery, her parents' visible pain, confused and frightened her and she feared that their grief could destroy them. Witnessing her parents' physical and emotional deterioration, confused by what was happening to them, and frightened by the possibility of further loss, Cathy eventually confronted her mother expressing her fear that the ritualistic visits to the cemetery were potentially destroying her father. In an inexplicable way, Cathy's honest reaction forwarded her parents' mourning and they improved after this confrontation. However, the silence surrounding the circumstances of her brother's death persisted and Cathy could not unburden herself of her guilt or openly express her grief.

- *Sense of worthlessness (24,31,32,51,74,77,78)*

Even before her brother's death, Cathy experienced her mother as being very hard on her, never on her brother. As a child, she was confused by the lack of closeness with her mother and by her father's insistence that Cathy maintain the peace in the home by 'keeping quiet'. Although later she was able to make sense of her father's protectiveness towards her mother and her mother's perceived resentment of her when she learnt that her mother had lost a child during her pregnancy with Cathy, her mother's harsh and alienating behaviour evoked a sense of *worthlessness* that intensified after her brother's death. Cathy was devastated by her mother's admission that she had lost her "favourite" child and by

her mother's constant and invidious comparisons of her with her deceased brother and her vicious verbal attacks.

After the loss, she felt stuck and immobilised and did not achieve very much. As she struggles to regain a sense of worth from an abandoned position, Cathy becomes aware of the link between a positive sense of self and growth. For many years she felt incapable of doing anything and she realises that this was related to her negative self-image, and that this inhibited her personal growth. She also becomes aware of the link between her health and the stress of grief and remains acutely aware that her mother's earlier bereavement, of which she was not a part, had the most profound impact on her self-confidence and self-esteem.

- *Previous losses and alienation (31,51,53,54,55,62)*

From a young age, Cathy felt her mother's harsh and *alienating* resentment towards her and was confused not knowing that her parents had suffered *previous losses* (two other children). With the loss of her brother, her mother's rejection of her intensified and Cathy became the target of her mother's anger and pain. In addition, her mother became extremely possessive of her father and, at times, Cathy even considered that her mother 'hated' her. Later when she realises that her mother's harsh behaviour towards her was an instability stemming from the loss of three children, she is able to understand that this was her mother's way of sorrowing and that her anger and verbal attacks were also part of her grief. However, for many years Cathy felt that she was fighting a lonely battle in the dark and she is aware that her mother's unresolved grief ("baggage") left her unable to support her (i.e. Cathy). She realises that her mother's atypical behaviour became a source of additional pain and Cathy regrets the lack of professional support that would have enabled her better to understand her mother's reactions following the loss.

- *Intensified attention and rejection (56,63,72,75)*

Left as an only child, Cathy experienced her mother's *attention* as focused on her and felt bound by her controlling and possessive behaviour that deprived Cathy of the freedom to be herself. Although she considered that this might have been based on concern, a fear that something might happen to her, her mother never openly expressed this fear and Cathy felt that she could not get close to her mother. It became an abnormal situation where her mother's attention on her *intensified* while simultaneously Cathy felt *rejected*.

In the emotional turmoil and the dialectic of closeness-distance, Cathy struggled for stability and survival. She has become aware that when one loses a brother or a sister, the mother's reaction towards the surviving child(ren) is possibly even more painful than how the sibling feels about the loss. For Cathy, her mother's anger and *rejection* were particularly painful and traumatic. It is only in

the last few years that she has been able to overcome the burden of the constraints imposed on her to be who her mother wanted her to be and has started to become her own person.

9. Loneliness and Isolation (15,55,58,59,62,64,70,76)

For Cathy, the loss of her brother was an extremely *lonely* experience. Despite the desire to alleviate her parents' suffering, she found that each member of the family coped *alone* with their own sorrow. Cathy and her parents all withdrew into their own "cocoon" and developed separately. In the relationship with her mother, Cathy felt alienated and rejected. While she herself was emotionally destroyed after the loss, her mother also distanced herself from Cathy by aligning herself with her deceased son and denying the brother-sister relationship. Although her mother acknowledged that Cathy's father was hurting, she only once acknowledged that they were *all* hurting and by implication that Cathy was also grieving. In her pain and neediness, her mother also clung to Cathy's father and appropriated this relationship. Thus, with the grief and the guilt that she experienced at the loss of her brother, Cathy also felt abandoned and for years she struggled alone with her pain.

In her relationship with others, Cathy felt ignored and ostracised. Others did not communicate with her or ask her how she felt. People enquired about her parents but no one commiserated with her in a meaningful way. Left as an only child, Cathy felt totally alone; rejected by her mother and abandoned by her friends, she had no one that she could talk to or discuss her mother's behaviour. She experiences a sense of absolute *loneliness* and *isolation*. She is unable to share the burden of her pain or her existential confusion arising from the loss and exacerbated by her own guilt and her mother's grief. She holds onto her hurt, totally alone in her feelings and unable to share her fears with anybody. Cathy's unexpressed hurt at being ignored by others is integrated later as she comes to realise that people "outside" one's sorrow cannot cope with one's grief and so eventually avoid one.

10. Letting go of Negative Feelings (29,30,31,32,53,61,63,65)

In time, Cathy realises that searching for reasons for her mother's harsh behaviour towards her is futile. She recognises that in order to move towards acceptance, she has to *let go of her negative feelings* (anger, hurt and guilt) that she held onto. When she learns that her parents had suffered previous losses, she is better able to cope with her mother's resentment and perceived rejection of her when she was a child. She realises that having lost three children, her mother could not be expected to be emotionally stable and she begins to understand that her mother's harsh behaviour may also have been part of her way of coping with her grief. In the understanding that her mother's instability stemmed in part from the loss of three children, Cathy moves towards forgiveness. She is able to let go of the hurt and pain and moves ambivalently towards accepting that the relationship simply existed as such. However, she remains acutely aware of the negative impact that her mother's behaviour has had on her own confidence and sense of self-worth and she retains anger towards her mother for her

lack of sensitivity. She still blames her mother for her vicious behaviour towards her following the loss of her brother but recognises that her anger could embitter her as it did her mother, which is something that she resists. She feels strengthened by her loss experience and hopes that in the process she has become a "nicer" person. In fact, the residue of Cathy's anger is transformed positively into a heightened awareness of the needs of bereaved children and becomes integrated into her lived experience of the loss of her brother. Transcending her own hurt, she sees more clearly how traumatic loss can be and she passionately champions the cause of support for bereaved children.

Although Cathy believes that she has worked through her guilt to a certain extent, she is aware that she still blames herself for the accident, as she has never discussed the circumstances of her brother's death with her parents. Cathy realises that, in order to move on with her life, she has to move beyond self-blame and let go of her guilt, just as she let go of the hurt of knowing that her brother was her mother's favourite child. However, she finds it difficult to forgive herself for insisting that her brother use the car and holds on to her guilt unable fully to confront the pain of her own loss.

11. Bereavement and vacillation (37,39,67)

For Cathy, *bereavement* was like a whirlpool of a host of different emotions that could not be faced immediately or all at once. Although she concealed and avoided acknowledging the reality of her own loss, she was constantly aware of her unresolved inner pain and the bewildering turbulence within. Her grief was multifaceted. It was not just sorrow nor just a moment circumscribed in time that she could visualise and face once and for all. Emotions surfaced unexpectedly in different forms, intensities and duration, challenging her emotionally before she suppressed them again and hid her feelings. She realises that she could deal with the painful emotions for a short time only and then needed to seal them off again. She expresses concern about small children who do not fully understand what is happening but simultaneously recognises the ambiguity of her own emotions. She *vacillates* between understanding and not understanding, knowing and not knowing, remembering and not remembering, acceptance and non-acceptance and realises that these paradoxical emotions arise through the painful awareness that death is final; of looking towards a horizon without that person and wanting to avoid the pain that lies ahead in the future.

12. Leaving Home (40)

Having honoured her 'pact' to stay at home and protect her parents, Cathy stands by her initial decision to *leave home* after three years, realising that for her own emotional and physical well-being she had to move away from the heavy atmosphere in the family. While she was aware of her tendency to escape from painful situations, in leaving home she never considered the possibility of escaping the pain of the loss. Cathy realised that from this pain there was no escape and all the emotions went with her as though she had "packed them" in her "suitcase".

13. The Sibling Attachment (43,47,48,49,50)

Cathy did not have a very close relationship with her brother and she has only vague memories of him as they were growing up. He was quite a bit younger than she was and as children they did not consistently share the same interests or the same space. In addition, Cathy's mother was always very protective of her brother, never of Cathy, and this also kept them separate so that they lived in their own worlds. Although Cathy cannot remember ever being really close to her brother, she was aware of his presence and recalls that they were in the "same boat" if they came home late. They started to become friends shortly before he died, when he was a young man (of 17-18 years) and they were able to share more. Cathy started to get to know her brother better and she remembers fondly that he was more like her cherished father than like her mother. As her brother matured and the relationship became a more egalitarian one, the potential for more sharing existed but this was cut short by his premature death.

14. The Value of Professional Support (45,54,57)

On looking back on her loss experience, Cathy realises how traumatic loss can be and recognises the *value of professional support* in a grief situation. It is only retrospectively that she becomes aware of the link between her mother's intense pain and anger and her hurtful behaviour, and she realises that outside support would have been helpful. She feels that it would have been beneficial if she had been counselled on her mother's behaviour and/or if someone had counselled her mother even after the loss of her first child. Having experienced the benefits of counselling herself, Cathy is acutely aware of the importance of counselling not only for the individual-sibling-in-grief, but also for the parents and for the circumstances that follow loss in a family. She recognises the need to break through the social denial of loss as a life event deserving of counselling and she feels that parents and others should develop a greater awareness of the value of counselling in situations of loss and not only when the child presents with emotional-behavioural problems. She remains acutely aware that children need help since loss is very traumatic.

15. Lack of Entitlement to Grieve (68,69,70,71)

On reflection, Cathy realises that her brother's death meant a great loss and sadness for her parents but not for her. They had lost a child, and he was "only" her brother. Her loss and the existence of her relationship with her brother was never really acknowledged, and she herself never gave herself permission to cry or to feel sad. She assumed that because her parents had lost a child and because she was alive, she was not allowed to be sorrowful. In the face of her parents' devastating loss, Cathy felt that she was *not entitled to grieve*. The existence of her relationship to her brother and her right to mourn his loss was denied in different ways both by her parents and by friends, and Cathy felt excluded and invisible. She veiled her pain, and perceived the loss exclusively within the context of

the parent-child relationship and not in the context of the brother-sister relationship. In retrospect Cathy believes that there may have been an awareness of her sorrow, but this was never openly acknowledged by her parents or by others. Within the complexity of all the relationships and emotions, Cathy struggled with the question of "who owned the loss?" never fully confronting her grief.

16. Father's Validating Presence (72,73)

Although Cathy's *father* also lost three children, he reacted differently to her mother and remained a very consistent and sensible man. Cathy valued the close relationship with her father and although they never discussed her mother's irrational behaviour, Cathy knew that he was aware of this and there was a silent, but mutual, understanding between them that provided the *validation* and support which she needed to restore a sense of security and stability in her world. This enabled Cathy to endure the intensely difficult period after her brother's death.

TABLE III
Participant 1: Cathy

Situated Narrative Description :
"A Ghostly Silence"

There is a lingering quality to Cathy's grief over the loss of her sibling. Thirty-nine years after her nineteen year-old brother's death in a motor vehicle accident, her experience of the loss is still so present to her that she feels as if it has just happened and a deep sadness persists. She remembers and grieves for her brother as he was when he died and she is still haunted by certain sights and sounds which she associates with him and which remain constant and painful reminders of the past.

As a child Cathy did not have a particularly close attachment to her brother. He was some five years younger than she was and they did not consistently share the same space or interests. Contributing to their distance was her mother's differential treatment of them. She was much harder on Cathy and always very protective of her brother. Living in "separate" worlds they did not play together. Implicit is some ambivalence towards her brother as he was the one embraced in the circle of mother's love and caring. Yet their lives were woven into the same fabric of existence. Cathy remembers that her brother was there, part of her experiential world, although not in a focused way. Later as he matured, Cathy and her brother found themselves in the same egalitarian "boat" and both would get into trouble if they came home late. Although the relationship had not been a close one, as her brother matured, they were able to share more, and they started to become friends a few years before his death.

On the night of the accident, Cathy and her brother had gone on an outing to a city far from home. She was in the cinema when she received news that her brother had had a bad accident. At first, Cathy felt shocked and was overcome with absolute fear. She was immediately aware of her parents' absence and of being alone and felt confused and helpless as fear immobilised her. It emerges later that her brother had had a previous accident and had been hospitalised. Also Cathy always suspected that her brother was her mother's favourite child. Thus, the fear can be understood not only as a reaction to the shock of the news that something had happened to her brother but also as an awareness of what this would mean to her parents, more specifically to her mother, as the loss of a child existed as a dreaded but submerged possibility within the family. In addition, Cathy had fear because on that fateful evening she had angrily insisted that her brother use the car and, for many years, she was tormented by feelings of personal responsibility and guilt.

While Cathy was cognitively aware of the seriousness of her brother's condition and this was confirmed by the doctor, she did not want to accept the reality of what had happened and continued to hope that he would recover. The suddenness of the loss gave the experience a sense of unreality and she remembers events only vaguely. Waiting for her parents to arrive she felt dazed (felt "half-

asleep”) and could not remember whether or not she went in to see her brother. On the arrival of her parents, everything became even more obscure (“hazy”) and Cathy felt totally out of touch, wanting to evade the reality of what happened. She withdrew and her mother took charge. At the moment of his death Cathy sat outside her brother's room while her parents remained at his bedside. She heard her mother's intense outcries of grief. On the journey home, Cathy's body yielded to the reality of the death and loss; she felt very cold.

Immediately after the death, Cathy felt largely ignored by those who came to offer their condolences to the family. She experienced an emotional distance from others but was uncertain whether this was because she withdrew or because people were more aware of her parents' intense grief. What she does remember is that apart from one person that commiserated with her at the funeral, no one else ever acknowledged her grief; or even noticed that she was part of the grieving family. The message she received from others was that the pain was in-her-parents and not in-her; it was *their* son that had died; he was *only* her brother. Still later, as an only child, Cathy experienced increased emotional distance when community members and friends shunned the family and even her own friends avoided her. People enquired about her parents but no one commiserated with her in a sincere or meaningful way. In retrospect, she realises that people outside the family's sorrow could not cope with their grief and so avoided them.

Even at the funeral and afterwards, Cathy felt strangely detached from what had happened; as though she was an "outsider-onlooker" observing her parents' terrific pain. She felt that the loss was not hers; that she was not even entitled to be sorrowful. Although Cathy's dominant feeling was that she was an outsider, recent reflection clarifies for her the ambiguity of her lived experience, namely that, emotionally she felt not only apart-from, but simultaneously and very painfully a-part-of the whole loss experience. Internally she felt torn and hurt but externally no one seemed to notice. The lack of acknowledgement that she too had suffered a significant loss intensified Cathy's existential confusion and the sense of unreality and separateness stayed with her for a long time.

Cathy felt excluded from the grieving family not only because others ignored her loss but also because the possibility that she was also grieving was never acknowledged within the family. Although her mother acknowledged that Cathy's father was hurting, she only once admitted that they were all hurting, and by implication, that Cathy was also hurting. Intensely painful and indelibly imprinted in her memory is the fact that her relationship to her brother was denied in a very tangible way: her name was not included in the inscription on his tombstone. The reference was only to “Our Son”.

In the awareness of her parents' profound pain, Cathy made a "pact" with herself to continue living at home for a specified period (three years) in an effort to protect them and facilitate their return to

“normal” life. However, much as she wanted to, Cathy felt unable to ameliorate her parents' suffering. She realised that with such a tragedy each one in the family had their own "baggage". Thrown into unprepared mourning, each person withdrew into his or her own protective cocoon and coped with his or her own pain.

After the funeral, a blanket of silence that was palpable fell over the family. The day-to-day living with their unvoiced grief was perplexing and extremely difficult for Cathy to bear. Every day every member of the family cried. At table they all sat and wept. She found it strange that her brother was so much part of their lives yet no one acknowledged his “existence” or spoke openly about their shared pain, so visible and audible to them all. Implicit is Cathy's hunger for, yet a fear of greater closeness to her parents, particularly to her mother. But there was simply no open discussion about the loss. Cathy and her parents never even mentioned her brother's name or spoke about their feelings. Later it emerges that Cathy's reticence arose partly from her inability to reveal that she had insisted that her brother use the car on the night of the accident; her parents' reticence, from the pain of having lost a third child. Both her own guilt and her mother's possible negative reaction put constraints upon the open disclosure of her feelings and the conspiracy of silence prevailed for many years.

Living at home and sensing the terrible hurt, Cathy felt that she was not entitled to grieve or to unburden herself of her guilt and she was painfully aware of being very alone in her feelings. Many years (fifteen years) after her brother's death, just before her father died, Cathy finally risked getting closer to her mother by breaking the silence and speaking to her about her brother for the first time. Thereafter, they were able to talk about him and Cathy managed to share her grief. However, they still never mentioned the circumstances of her brother's death. On reflection, Cathy is able to relate her parents' silence surrounding death to an earlier situation of loss (when her brother lost a friend) and she realises that, even before her brother's death, her parents never discussed feelings or asked them (i.e. her and her brother) how they felt. However, to this day, Cathy's anxiety about her perceived culpability prevents her from sharing this secret with her mother.

Constricted in the circle of silence by her own guilt, her mother's atypical behaviour, and the absence of helpful community, Cathy resorts to withdrawal/escape. Although rationally she knows that her brother is dead, emotionally she does not experience the death as a full reality. For a long time after the funeral she imagines, for brief moments at least, that her brother is still there, that it is a bad dream and she even listens for the sounds he used to make. Contributing to her denial and tendency to hold onto the pre-loss state is the sudden, potentially avoidable and premature nature of the death. Cathy's unacknowledged knowledge is reinforced by her parents' unabated mourning, by their deterioration and by her intention to protect them and herself. She evades the full force of her grief and struggles against memories of the past vacillating between “remembering” and “not remembering”, “knowing”

and “not knowing” and is aware that this dialectic was also part of her not-wanting-to-accept what had happened.

Cathy experienced death as deceptive; the accompanying bereavement, as multifaceted and bewildering. It was not simply sadness, nor was it a single moment circumscribed in time that could be visualised and faced once and for all. Her bereavement was like a whirlpool of many different emotions, surfacing and vanishing again over a long period of time. Emotions appeared in different forms, intensities and duration, challenging her ability to cope with more before she suppressed them again and concealed her feelings. She could deal with the painful emotions for a short time only and then closed them up again. She reflects on how difficult it must be for small children who do not fully understand what is happening. Yet Cathy recognises the ambiguity of understanding and not understanding. For her the painful awareness that death is irreversible, that the person is no longer there and the anticipation of the pain that lay ahead in the future made it even more difficult to accept what had happened. She did not want to go through all that pain again and continued to turn away from the reality of the loss.

Unable to integrate the past and afraid to face the future, Cathy was virtually immobilised by her conflicting emotions. She felt increasingly worthless and incompetent. She did not achieve very much and remembers the period after her brother's death as a very low intellectual period, a stagnant period, which lasted for many years. As she explores this aspect of her loss experience, new meaning emerges and Cathy becomes aware of the link between her low self-image and the lack of personal growth during this period. She also realises that there is a relationship between sorrow and one's physical well-being.

Her parents' ritualistic visits to the cemetery frightened and confused Cathy. Before her very eyes she witnessed their deterioration and feared the destruction of what remained of her family. Eventually, in anger and with fear, she told her mother that this “must stop” lest it destroy her father. It was then that her mother finally admitted that she had lost her favourite child, thus confirming Cathy's tacit understanding that her brother was her mother's most cherished child. This honesty promoted her parents' mourning and facilitated improvement. However, her mother's confession hurt, crushed, even devastated Cathy. Upon reflection she realises that her mother was basically hitting back at her own pain. However, that insight did not take away a lingering sense of worthlessness.

Since Cathy blamed herself for the accident - because she had insisted that her brother take the car on that night - she assumed the responsibility. Thus, it never occurred to her to question God or to ask “why” it had happened. Her parents' reticence, especially her mother's angry silence and vicious verbal attacks, were experienced as judgements upon her, feeding her guilty self-accusations. Caught in a web of mutual protection and self-protection, Cathy remains voiceless, never fully facing her loss.

Deep fault permeates her life. Try as she may, she cannot shake it off. She cannot speak to anyone about her guilt. It is only when she goes for counselling that she is able to say for the first time how guilty she feels and realises the lingering, relentless impact of this emotion. She is beginning to authentically "work through" the whole matter as she grasps the subtle but pervasive relationship between her sense of guilt and blame and her pain in knowing that, in her mother's affections, her brother was always first.

From early childhood, long before her brother's death, Cathy painfully sensed her mother's alienating resentment towards her and felt confused by her harshness. Her father's restraining injunctions that Cathy keep quiet to maintain family peace, also perplexed her. Later on light was shed upon her mother's resentment and her father's protectiveness. The loss of their son was a repeat agony. During her pregnancy with Cathy, her mother had lost a three-year-old child. Her parents suffered a second loss, an infant, when Cathy was two years old. Tucked between these two "ghosts" Cathy was unable to get close to her mother. Since her mother deliberately withheld the basic information that Cathy had had siblings and that they were lost through death, Cathy could never understand her mother's harsh, resentful behaviour. Knowing that it was at least partly motivated by loss that had not been mourned, mitigated, but did not erase the destructive effects on Cathy's confidence and self-worth.

After the death of her son, her mother's anger and resentment intensified. She would persistently comment that Cathy's brother was "like-her-family", whereas Cathy "was-not-like-her-family". These invidious comparisons exacerbated Cathy's guilt and sense of loneliness and alienation. Thus, in the face of the death of her brother that was a loss in itself, a loss compounded by the fact that she felt responsible for it, Cathy also had to endure her mother's wrath. Insanely in grief over her son's death, extremely possessive of her husband, Cathy's mother lashed out at her like a "boxer hits at something". Or worse, with what felt like vicious hatred.

The realisation that her mother's emotional instability stemmed from unresolved grief over the loss of three children evoked some compassion. Sorrow had gone amok even before it began to abate. Nevertheless, Cathy will always remember fighting a lonely battle in the dark against an unknown enemy. And she knows deep down that when death takes a child, the mother's reaction towards her surviving child(ren) is even more important than how the sibling feels about the lost brother or sister. In fact, her mother used her as a target at which she unleashed her pain and rage. Cathy turned into an indispensable "outsider", a much-needed castaway. This "position predicament" stripped her of the very freedom to "be" herself (to ex-ist). Her mother's ambivalence swallowed her up even as she distanced herself from her. It turned into a strange dialectic. She was a "nobody" who was the "only" one who could affirm her mother as "mother" but she was not the child that her mother wanted. It is the kind of dialectic that could precipitate madness. Cathy kept herself sane by clinging to the tender

idea that perhaps her mother lived in constant fear that she would lose Cathy, her only remaining child, to death as well. The sad truth is that her mother never once openly expressed such a fear. Cathy focuses her regret upon the lack of supportive or grief counselling at the time of the very first loss, an intervention that might have changed her story altogether.

As Triangles are wont to do within families, they wound and they offer respite. Although Cathy's father also lost three children, he remained a sensible and consistent person and handled the loss very differently to her mother. Cathy and her father had a silent pact of mutual understanding, one that sheltered her suffering and guaranteed support, security and stability. It enabled Cathy to endure the difficult, indeed 'crazy' period after her brother's death. Her father's presence was more real than her agonising hope for her mother's love.

After three years, Cathy follows her initial decision to leave home. Her realisation that she cannot take away her parents' pain and the conviction that for her own physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing she needs to move away from the heavy atmosphere that permeates her parental home, facilitates the separation. Yet, she does not for a moment consider that she will escape the pain of the loss and its impact on her and her family. Although she no longer has to witness her parents' grief in her day-to-day living, the emotional holding on continues and all the emotions that she experienced at home go with her as if she had "packed them" into her "suitcase". Until today she still holds on to the painful memories and carries a parcel of her brother's belongings that remains unopened, and which travels with her wherever she goes. She did not run away from emotional "baggage" associated with pain, loss and death; she simply left the package unwrapped.

In retrospect, Cathy realises that the question triggered by her brother's death and dominating her life has been: who-owned-the-grief? The meta-message coming to her from family and others has been that her parents lost their son. It was *their* pain and their sorrow, especially her mother's. It was the parent-child and not the brother-sister relationship that mattered. Her loss was never acknowledged. She was not entitled to grieve. So Cathy never gave herself permission to cry or to feel sad. It was fault enough that she was still alive. In the face of her parents' devastating loss, there was no room for her to sorrow as well. She was excluded from the grief as if her loss were invisible and her pain non-existent. At least it was never acknowledged by her parents. Rationally she understands that perhaps they were too preoccupied to notice her, absorbed in their own sorrow over the multiplicity of losses. Emotionally though she cannot fully forgive her mother for adding to her pain.

In time, Cathy comes to realise that searching for reasons for her mother's irrational behaviour is futile and she recognises that in order to move on with her life, she has to let go of the negative feelings (anger, hurt and guilt) that she held onto. While she is able to let go of the hurt and pain and moves

ambivalently towards accepting that the relationship simply existed as such, she still blames herself for her brother's accident. She remains acutely aware of the negative impact that her mother's reactions have had on her own confidence and self-worth. However, while she retains anger towards her mother for her lack of sensitivity, the anger is later transformed positively into a heightened awareness of the needs of bereaved children. Cathy is gradually able to integrate this into her lived experience of the loss of her brother as she passionately champions the cause of these "forgotten" mourners. However, she holds on to the sadness and self-blame, unable fully to confront the pain of her own loss.

TABLE III
Participant 2: Dia

Situated Narrative Description :
"Hidden Sorrow"

In speaking about the loss of her sister, Dia places the experience within the context of the sibling relationship. She recalls that from an early age she and her elder sister were very different. As children, what she remembers best is her sister's voice: indecisive, timid, constantly seeking affirmation as she addressed Dia by her pet name. Dia is aware that, because of the passage of time, her memories may be exaggerated. Yet her sister's remembered voice elicits strong memories, highlighting their personality differences: her sister fearful, not prepared to take risks, conforming, enjoying the safety of the familiar; Dia more adventurous, bold and, therefore, more likely to land in trouble. Dia often became impatient with her sister's apparent helplessness, suspecting and almost intuitively knowing that her sister was not as fragile as she appeared. As a child and young woman, her sister's actions frequently reflected an underlying strength which contradicted the apparent weakness conveyed by her voice; something which her parents and grandmother were unaware of because her sister was small and delicate and gave the impression that she was weak.

Yet Dia felt no resentment towards her sister. The only conflict between them arose when she tried to curb Dia's daring, and, in her sister's eyes, "irresponsible", behaviour. Dia realised that they were playing certain roles (weak/strong; fearful/ fearless; etc.) and she often deliberately provoked her sister. It was fun for her to watch her more responsible elder sister panicking. These roles met their needs in a mutually satisfying way: if it was dark Dia felt that she had to walk with her sister but she realised that it was just as much her own choice as it was her sister's. This (constructive) dialectic gave her sister the privilege-of-being-scared and satisfied her immediate security needs; while Dia felt that she was "proving something" and affirmed her identity as separate from her sister's. Although Dia realises that she was also afraid, their identities were so interwoven that she gave up the option of being afraid or weak and became the "tough" one - her sister's counterpart. Even with the trauma of her sister's sudden and premature death, Dia could not allow herself the "privilege" of revealing her feelings: could not acknowledge her vulnerability, admit that she could not cope or openly yield to her grief. She veiled her feelings; expressed her hidden sorrow only after she was married (3 years after the loss).

Although Dia and her sister consistently shared the same space, she felt that they never became real friends ("pals") because of their differences and the four-year plus age gap. In addition, Dia's family bonded very closely with their extended family. Thus she and her sister always played with cousins of similar age, her sister with the older children and Dia with the "little ones". Yet her sister was very

much an integral part of her world. So much so that after her sister's death Dia realises that: "... she has *grown* in my mind!"

Her sister married a young man who was well known to the family and to the extended family and whose personality was very similar to Dia's. Although Dia generally got on well with her sister's husband, they also clashed openly because he upheld some of the conservative views of the time; views which Dia found unacceptable.

Prior to the accident her sister had spent some time with Dia and her parents before her husband joined them for a few days at the sea. Then they separated again for the journey home. Her sister had been married only one and a half years and, after having time together as a family, the parting was experienced as yet another separation. Driving at a distance behind her sister and brother-in-law, Dia and her parents were flagged down by an oncoming motorist who informed them of the accident. The family was shocked by the dreadful news. They suspected that her brother-in-law had fallen asleep at the wheel. Knowing her sister's tendency to panic in a crisis, Dia silently considered the possibility that *she* may have grabbed the steering wheel as the car left the road. Her sister was killed instantly. Her husband suffered serious injuries.

Driving to the mortuary to identify her sister's body, Dia was deeply aware of how devastating this was for her parents. They spent a long time at the mortuary and Dia remembers with warmth and appreciation the presence of a young man who made an effort to stay and talk with her for a long time. She felt particularly grateful that he did not try to offer easy consolation. Thereafter they drove to the hospital since Dia and her parents were also concerned about her sister's husband. The family's life was suspended as they waited at Casualties for information about his condition/chances of survival. They were then joined by his family and stayed near the hospital until he was off the danger list. Then only did they resume their journey home.

Although Dia was included in all the arrangements after her sister's death, no one spoke about their feelings. Her mother was not a very talkative person and her father was more intuitive than analytical so that feelings were felt rather than analysed. Dia was greatly relieved that nobody asked her how she felt about the loss. She would not have been able to talk about it at that stage.

The funeral was awful for her. She regretted that her brother-in-law had not recovered sufficiently to attend his wife's funeral. More particularly Dia was distressed by her parents' grief. But, she could at least withdraw ("cut out") because there were people, friends and family, who supported her parents. She is aware that because of her personality it was difficult for her to acknowledge her feelings, to admit that she could not cope or to immediately express her grief. She needed time to be alone, to

reflect, and sort things out in her mind (cognitively). She could not risk breaking down. Implicitly this was not the way she knew herself or the way others perceived her. Only once she felt in control could she talk about what had happened. Before that, people must "please" leave her alone. Later Dia in fact asked them to do so. Although she spoke to a close friend on the telephone a few times immediately after her sister's death, she was reticent with others. Emotional trust was difficult for her and she could not share her grief even with her boyfriend. Implicitly she could not trust herself to cope with her intense emotions, feared breaking down completely, and consequently veiled her grief and carried on as "normal".

After the funeral, her parents' grief had the most significant and powerful effect on her. Dia realised that they did not have the energy to cope and she experienced this as a "demand" to-be-with-them-in-their-suffering. Needing time to be alone, she resisted being drawn into the family grief. She felt tremendous relief in the knowledge that her parents had a close and very supportive social network that allowed her to withdraw and to deal with her loss privately. Significantly, her father, whom she loved dearly, her ally who always supported her, was the one person who threatened her emotional equilibrium. She dreaded his persistent attempts to draw her out to talk about her inner feelings and sought to evade discussion. Inner conflict arose as Dia became angry and impatient with her father while simultaneously feeling deep compassion for him. Having to complete an academic task (thesis) enabled Dia legitimately to close her door against the "storm outside" and gave her the space and time to reconnect with herself. In retrospect, she realises that it would have been terrible if the family constellation had been different - if, for example, there had been a younger sibling - as Dia would have had to assume responsibility for this sibling and she would inevitably have been sucked into the family grief. Something that she desperately wanted to avoid.

From the outset, Dia and her family were embraced by helpful community. A close friend who had also lost a sister provided her with valuable support (more through mutual understanding than by talking about the death and loss). Her parents had adequate external support, enabling Dia to distance herself from her parents' sorrow. This was very important to her and she felt that having time to be alone was her "salvation". She especially valued the support of one of her mother's friends with whom she had a special relationship (a "mother-idol"). This woman made herself available as soon as she had news of the death: driving down to be with the family; physically being there and doing/acting rather than simply talking about the loss. Through this person's presence and her repeated actions, Dia learned the meaning of unconditional friendship and realised its significance in her loss experience. Dia's own friends and her sister's friends were also caring and involved, but Dia realised that they were all at a stage in their lives where they had other priorities (weddings; studies to complete, etc.) and she did not expect a great deal of support from them. Implicitly she felt relieved that they did not

have time to focus on her loss and she was able to withdraw and deal with her grief in a way that she felt most comfortable - through private reflection.

For a long time, Dia's greatest dis-ease arose from the way her parents handled the loss. Although she recognised that her sister had many lovable qualities, Dia experienced her parents' tendency to idealise her sister as foolish and as bordering on "idolatry". She was annoyed by their "twisting of the facts" because her sister was no longer there. Eventually Dia confronted them with the truth: "You are remembering incorrectly!". Later they became more realistic. Dia also experienced some discomfort because of her parents' habitual visits to the cemetery and she soon withdrew from this ritual. She preferred to hold on to her remembered image of her sister and found it meaningless to visit a "stone". Adding to her distress was the fact that, after the initial shock, her parents grieved differently - her father wanted to talk incessantly about the loss while her mother preferred to deal with her feelings privately. Dia realised that these differences caused some damage, albeit slight, to her parents' relationship. Dia would rather have handled her grief as her mother did but she felt caught between the two: implicitly by siding with the one she would be betraying the other. She felt that her father wanted to "expose" the sorrow but that she and her mother were not ready for such "exposure". Although Dia accepted that this was her father's way of coping with his grief, these differences created considerable conflict and, for her, became the most difficult part of the loss experience. The dialectic, exposing-concealing, also meant that her parents were unable to support each other and she felt the responsibility of almost having to "carry" them.

Anniversary dates (birth and death) were religiously observed by her parents and Dia realised that if she failed to acknowledge and/or celebrate these special occasions with her parents, relationships became strained and uncomfortable. Although Dia always remembered these anniversaries, her need to spend such days quietly on her own was unacceptable. Emotionally she felt bound by unwritten family rules ("laws"), even after she left home, to commemorate these special occasions with her parents. To this day, even after her father's death, the feeling remains the same: there is no explanation for her absence that can soften her mother's hurt and Dia continues to respond to the expectation that she be there for her mother. As a mother herself, Dia has often wondered how she would have handled the loss of her child.

Later when her nephews died, Dia observed that the two families coped with their loss very differently. She realises that the surviving sibling's experience of the loss depends largely on the parents' personalities and on how they cope with their grief. Although Dia feels that the way in which a sibling grieves is an individual matter, she realises that other members in the family have their own needs and characteristic ways of coping. In her situation, this placed immediate and repeated demands on her to cope with the loss in the same way as her parents did. She experienced this as doubly

stressful. It became even more taxing than the fact that she had suffered a loss. While Dia perceived her parents as very reasonable ("civilised") people, she subjectively experienced their grief as a subtle demand from which she could not turn away. She realises that it would have been easier if there had been other siblings who would have intuitively understood and shared that responsibility of, "Let us help mom and dad cope".

For Dia, separating from her parents became an extremely traumatic experience. She felt bound by her parents' vulnerability and struggled emotionally to give herself permission to leave home. Restrained by her ambivalent feelings, she could not bring herself to say, "Now I am going!" It was also socially unacceptable at that time for a young lady to live on her own but, more importantly, she was concerned about her parents' reaction. They would not understand her need to leave home. Her fears were confirmed. Her parents blamed each other for driving her away, clearly not understanding Dia's needs. For her parents "leaving home" was a foreign concept. Her elder sister had followed traditional social/family expectations, staying at home until she married. Dia realised that she was breaking new ground. Her anxiety was amplified because as the only surviving child she became her parents' sole focus. She felt suffocated but she was also aware that they could not come to terms with their loss and that their needs were greater than their understanding of her situation. Dia in fact continued to live at home even after she started working. Her first break from home came sixteen months after the death when she and her friend decided to travel overseas. By this stage Dia, stifled by her parents' intensified clinging, wanted to escape. But she knew that, for them, this separation would probably be terrifying - no fixed addresses; no real contact for three months. She realised that her need to spread her wings would have been less of a wrench if she had not been the only surviving child. On her return from overseas, Dia finally overcame her fear and trepidation and succeeded in moving into her own apartment.

Dia's loss experience had echoes that reverberated, encompassing others. Despite their differences, her brother-in-law was a friend and she felt for his loss. Because he could not be present at the funeral Dia sensed that he experienced difficulties in coming to terms with his loss; he could not reach "closure". Later we hear that he re-married twice and that his third wife looked strikingly like Dia's sister. The family never ever blamed her sister's husband for the death and maintained contact with him even after he remarried. Although Dia's father, who was very emotional, could have accused him of: "not looking after her well enough", her mother, who was more logical and realised that he cared about their daughter very much, insisted that under no circumstances should any blame be apportioned to him. Indeed her mother felt that for him the loss was worse than for anyone else. Dia herself never blamed her brother-in-law. She knew that he loved her sister dearly and would have done everything he could to protect her. She sensed how devastating it was for him and, after the funeral, she often visited her brother-in-law who was bedridden for a long time. Although the reason for the visits was

to assist him with physiotherapy, she was aware that for him the value of these visits was the opportunity to talk. Psychic healing (grief) rather than physical healing became the main focus. This task was particularly formidable for Dia who preferred to keep her grief hidden. She could not confront her pain immediately for fear of breaking down completely, yet she experienced a deep sense of responsibility almost to have to support him emotionally as well. While she does not perceive herself as a victim weighed down by responsibility, Dia realises that witnessing the struggle of others around her added to her pain.

Although Dia's first encounter with the death of a loved one (her grandfather) was painful, she feels that a sudden death of a young person is even more traumatic than death after a lengthy illness. The unexpected loss of her sister left her with severe anticipatory anxiety when travelling to the sea by car. Only this year (i.e. 30 years later) has she been able to overcome her fear but even so, she still associates travelling on the highway with having an accident and takes the necessary safety precautions. Paradoxically she is more relaxed when travelling in town.

Although Dia and her sister did not have a strong bond nor did they trust each other fully, Dia started to miss her sister when planning her own marriage (more as a helper than as a friend). She regretted the absence of a supportive sisterly relationship and realised that, despite their differences which meant that they were unlikely to share much, they would still have been there for each other. However, Dia is also aware that her image of her sister remained frozen at the time when she died and she realises that their relationship would have evolved and changed. She often wondered what her world would have been like with her sister: once she had children; when their parents got older; etc. She recognises the dialectical paradox that it could have been easier and more difficult; positives and negatives. Caring for elderly parents would have been easier if her sister had been there. Her sister might have provided better support for her mother after her father's death because her sister and mother were much closer to each other. However, there might have been more conflict than support between Dia's family and that of her sister. Nevertheless, the missing is still deeply and mysteriously felt. Dia gradually becomes aware of an increasing anxiousness at being left entirely alone at some stage in her life. She realises that a spouse is not family. He can choose to be there or not. But a sister (like one's child) *must* be there whether she feels like it or not. Implicitly the sibling relationship is a significant and infinite one.

Later on, Dia's developing relationship with her daughter fills the lack (gap) created by the loss of her sister. In the relationship with her daughter, Dia experiences the sisterly bond that she yearned for. Her daughter naturally grew into the sisterly role: closeness, sharing a lot, similar in some ways but also very different. However, Dia's awareness that her daughter could become a replacement for her sister generated some anxiety, especially when her daughter wanted to pursue the same field of

interest as her deceased aunt. Ambivalent feelings arose as Dia was aware that her daughter was very talented in this field but, simultaneously, she feared that she might have influenced her daughter's choice. Dia actively discouraged her daughter from following the same career as that of her deceased aunt. It was only on her daughter's firm insistence that Dia relented and allowed her to pursue her interest, satisfied that this was *her* wish and not Dia's own need to resurrect her sister.

A lingering and intense feeling for Dia was that the wrong sister had died and she frequently questioned: "Why her and not me?" Although she realises that her own death would have been painful for the family, Dia argued that her existence was relatively unimportant at that stage of her life: she was unmarried, unsure of her career direction, and not in a serious relationship. By comparison, her sister's life was more rooted and intertwined with that of many other people. Her sister's loss was, therefore, more poignant and more deeply mourned - that is the way Dia perceived it. Adding to her feeling that her own death would have been less traumatic for everybody was an implicit sense that her sister was the "special" child who could do no wrong: grandmother's refrain, "She was not made for this world"; mother's conviction that Dia was always at fault, "Because I know my children well!"; Dia's own feeling that her sister was more successful; that she would have provided better support for her mother. Although Dia did not really feel guilty, she felt strongly that if she had had the choice she would have planned it differently; *she*, not her sister should have died.

For a long time Dia felt extremely angry with God for allowing such a wrong and unnecessary thing to happen, for creating havoc and pain in the lives of so many people. At some point she realises, with relief, that she *can* be angry with God provided she does not turn away from Him. She confronts God and demands answers. The realisation that she could say directly to Him, "I am angry. Help me sort it out!", came after a long personal struggle and after that Dia felt that she was able to cope. She is aware that this would not have been a solution if it had come from anybody else. Indeed Dia was appalled by the abstract and extremely emotional ideas of others who attempted to console her with a lot of "religious talk". For her the loss was a lived reality, a painful "given". Attempting to persuade her otherwise was not helpful. Dia's loss experience precipitated an awareness of the difference between the unquestioning acceptance of the ready-made incantations of organised religion and the harsh and concrete reality of being-with-loss. She questions previously held religious assumptions. The story of Job - God as the Ultimate Planner - strikes a chord in her because of her passion for planning. The insight that there are better plans than she can visualise or conceptualise enables her to find new meaning and to entrust God with the planning of her life.

Over the years, Dia also found comfort in certain situations. Negatively, she could often console herself with the thought that, because of her sister's personality (small and delicate), she would not have coped well with the more difficult aspects of life. Positively, she realised and also found comfort

in the thought that her sister had not been deprived of the joy of marriage and that she had, in effect, enjoyed the best part of her life. Dia realised that after that only difficulties lay ahead. Later, Dia also observed certain interactions between her brother-in-law and his second wife that made her aware that he could be a hard, difficult and dominating man. Had he treated her sister in a similar way, Dia felt certain that she (Dia) would not have kept quiet (she would have protected her sister). At such times her sorrowful mood would be replaced by one of quiet acceptance: "perhaps it was better"/ "for the best". Implicitly by focusing on memories of her sister and their relationship in the past (their differences; that they did not share much; her sister's vulnerability; etc.) and projecting these into present situations, Dia manages to soften, almost minimise, her own loss and her sister's loss. However, this consolation vanishes as she realises that just as her own personality had changed a great deal, so her sister's personality would also have changed over the years. Their relationship would have developed. She realises that "one seeks these things"; but recognises that they had indeed both suffered a significant loss.

It was three years after the loss, within the intimacy of her own marriage, before Dia was able to cry for the first time and could say to her husband: "It was *terrible* for me!" Only then does she feel free to openly acknowledge and express her own grief. After that, she felt that she could cope. She trusted her husband emotionally. She knew that he would not become upset by her grief and also knew that she could reveal as much, or as little, as she wanted to without fear that he would insist that she disclose more. Implicitly, because her husband was outside her loss he would not be affected in the same way as she was, would be prepared to listen without imposing *his* interpretation on the loss.

TABLE III

Participant 3: Elena

Situated Narrative Description :

"Frozen Images and Immobilised Existence"

The call changed her life. Two and a half-years previously Elena, then a young student of twenty two, was studying for her final university exams. Her cousin's voice at the other end of the line was calm and deliberate: something had happened to Elena's brother. She should stay at home; they were on their way to her. Elena was alarmed but her cousin deflected her urgent questions. She immediately realised that something serious had happened. Anxiously she tried to contact her brother's friends who had accompanied him on a bike run that day, but she realised that they had switched off their phones. Finally, Elena arrived at the terrible truth: her brother was dead; killed instantly in a motorcycle accident.

Her immediate thought was of her parents, particularly of her mother. She realised that they had to be told. Somebody had to say: "Tom is dead!" In the awareness that there was no going back (no way of rescuing her brother this time as she had done in the past), and also realising that the extended family could not bring themselves to tell her parents, Elena immediately went to them and in her usual candid manner broke the awful news. Guilty as the bearer of dreadful news, delivered abruptly, Elena realised that there was no gentle way to convey the finality of death.

From the moment of voicing this truth, Elena's whole world changes radically. The death is a "hole in their hearts", in the very life of the family. Her brother - twenty-five years old; young, full of energy and "life-hungry" - was a central life force in the family. The home reverberated with his vitality. He was her mother's special child ("soft spot"). He also played a pivotal role in the family businesses. With the loss, Elena becomes aware of an emotional and physical emptiness. Their lives feel empty; their existence totally transformed. The gaping void persists; more keen at special times of the year, but always there. Elena realises that going away to a different location does not help.

In the awareness of the gap created by her brother's death, Elena put aside her own career and took over her brother's business. Although this was a major disruption in her life, she felt that in some way she was still "doing something for him". She realises that she was also doing this for her parents. She felt the need to support them; could not let the family fall apart. She immersed herself in her deceased brother's work. His life and her life merged. Implicitly she was not only living his un-lived life for him and maintaining her role as his caretaker (filling in, covering up for him in his absence) as she had always done when he was still alive, but she was also preserving what remained of her family.

Elena feels no anger about her brother's death. While she is aware of her brother's weaknesses (fast driving; fast-living), weaknesses that ultimately led to his death, for her his life was a "success story". He had changed a lot towards the end of his life, ultimately becoming a more caring and contented person - something which others also noticed. Did he have a presentiment that he was going to die? Before the loss, Elena would become angry with her brother and they fought a lot because of his persistent demands. But their conflicts were short-lived. The sibling bond prevailed. And now she feels no anger - she simply misses him. His hunger-for-life takes on new meaning and she finds some solace in the thought that although his life was cut short, her brother had truly lived his allotted span to the full. His death was almost "heroic", giving meaning to his life in a good way without Elena needing to deal with the ambiguities of the past.

For Elena, the pain and the missing linger on. After two and a half years, she still yearns for her brother and thinks constantly of him. She is aware not only of the loss in the present but she also recognises the loss of future relationships and possibilities (when she gets married; has children; etc.). She looks to the future with sorrow because her brother cannot physically be there for important events in her passage through life. Yet she also holds on to the hope that she will one day be reunited with her brother in the afterlife.

What she hates most about the loss is the erosion of age; the relentless passage of time. Memories of her brother will start to dim. She fears that a time will come when she will not be able to remember his smile or the tone of his voice. The awful encroachment of distance saddens her. In time, inevitably she will lose touch with her brother. She realises that she will lack the capacity to visualise him as being older. She will continue to age, but his image will remain frozen at the age at which he died. At present she is still able to connect with him as she is also young and she remembers him well. She fears that as she grows older she will lose him completely, fears that in the more distant future, not only the person but also the relationship will be lost. She sets about very deliberately to remember him in as much detail as possible and holds on to the memories of her brother; feels that she must remember; that she cannot forget.

The image of her brother's face, as she remembers it when the family goes to identify his body, is indelibly imprinted in her mind. The accident left his face undamaged and unmarked. She had never seen him looking as good as he appeared on that day. Always a good-looking young man, he was now more than handsome: beautiful, peaceful, almost serene. But he was cold and lifeless. The stark fact, the finality of death shocks Elena. As the reality hits home, her wretchedness blends with the miserable day's cloudy, drizzly weather ... an indelible imprint of weeping, in seemingly cosmic empathy.

At his funeral, Elena felt comforted by the impressive number of people that attended the service. She had never seen the church so full. Others confirmed this. She realises that despite her brother's mischievous and somewhat reckless behaviour, he was greatly loved. Although she was aware of her brother's weaknesses, as his sister she knew that deep down he was a good person. It became clear to her that he was very popular, that he had touched the lives of many people. This public affirmation of her brother's underlying goodness enables Elena to remember him with pride; in a good way.

The worst part of the loss experience for Elena is witnessing her parents' bereavement. She is acutely aware that the loss has changed her parents. They are simply not the people that they were before the loss. It is a double wound: the changes that she has undergone; and the radical transformation of her parents. Although Elena realises that she cannot possibly understand the intensity of a mother's pain, she lives in the shadow of maternal sorrow. And so the family grief pervades her being: constantly, unremittingly, she "lives", "breathes", and "eats" it. She is under no illusions that her eldest brother is also hurting, but she feels that it is different for him. He has some respite when he goes back to his own home whereas, living at home, Elena is totally immersed in the grief-laden atmosphere.

Her parents grieve differently. Her mother will weep, speak to her husband, or do whatever she feels will forward her mourning; her father holds on to his inner pain, is not as open about it. Yet, Elena senses her father's silent grief and also feels his deep sorrow. She knows that the loss has struck at his very core; he is his son. Elena resists the changes in her parents; they magnify the pain of her own struggles. Without blaming them for the way they have become, she does not accept what she witnesses. Catching a glimpse of her mother as she knew her, seeing her laugh, giggle or simply talk as she used to do, fills Elena with joy and hope as she realises that her mother is able to reconnect with her pre-loss self; that she can survive the loss.

Elena experiences the loss and the accompanying grief as a fight, a constant inner emotional struggle as she vacillates between facing the pain or struggling against it. Although time has dulled the acute edge of the pain of her recent loss, still, it is an ongoing emotional battle. She is not sure whether she has blocked her feelings or dealt with them. Just facing the loss, or struggling against it, is equally difficult. It affects her entire being. Her emotional struggle is reflected in a physically experiential manner (hair loss, weight loss, a general malaise) and she realises that mind and body cannot be separated: if one feels ill at ease emotionally, this is manifested in one's physical being; in one's appearance.

The struggle extends to her faith and Elena becomes aware of changes in her relationship with God. Before the loss, she had been sure of her religious beliefs but rock-solid convictions became chipped. Distance, rather than anger or hatred, marks her feelings toward God. She has withdrawn from Him;

not wilfully or rebelliously but because she has lost the sense of His presence. Elena becomes aware that she has changed and is unhappy about the way she has become. While more recently she has started to draw closer to God again, she continues to grapple with her feelings, attempting to make sense of these changes. On reflection, she thinks that she may be disappointed in God, perhaps feels some disillusionment with Him. Her shaken faith, and a sometimes absent God, distress her but as a Christian she accepts the Lord's mysterious ways. She recognises that she needs more time to work through this distance-closeness dimension, to re-establish a bond with God but realises that this requires work: it is a labour.

In the face of the emotional shock and the upheaval in the family, and in an attempt to maintain the former closeness of the family unit, Elena's immediate response is to-be-strong-for her parents (particularly for her mother); to be there for them as much as possible. Her parents' immobilisation at the loss of their son hammers at her consciousness. She has to sustain them and help them through it. She tries to be stronger than she actually feels. Elena surprises herself by her seemingly incredible strength. Yet deep down she feels extremely weak and her body reflects this reality. Although, like her mother, Elena also feels like "stopping life" she realises that withdrawal is not an option. If she collapses the family will fall apart. She senses her mother's immeasurable pain and, in comparison, her own grief pales into insignificance. Strange, but meaningful: her mother never openly enquires about Elena's feelings. Equally meaningful, Elena maintains the silence in the belief that consistently being there for her mother, caring for her needs, renders words unnecessary. So Elena puts aside her grief and continues with life as "normal". Her strength, she believes, must have been sent by God. Later she realises that she has indeed become a stronger person, able to cope with a lot more than she did before the loss.

From the outset, the burden of responsibility for her parents weighed heavily on Elena: from informing them of the death, to helping them through the funeral, to being-there-for-them as much as possible afterwards. Elena enjoyed an overseas holiday; a break away from home. Although the extended family there asked many questions about her brother and Elena did not block the loss, she realises that talking about her brother's death with others outside the immediate family is different. Not having to face her parents' grief is like a weight off her shoulders. Coming back home meant coming back to the heaviness and the pain. Her parents remain frozen in their grief and Elena begins to feel as if there is almost no movement in her own mourning. Their grief seems an inescapable, heavy responsibility. She remains steadfast in her care and support. Yet a curious dialectic grinds on: despite her care, their persistent grief makes her question her adequacy and she cannot perceive a light at the end of the tunnel.

Elena keeps busy and hides the inner pain that is constantly with her. In addition to the need to be strong for her parents, she is aware that by nature she is inclined to conceal her feelings, to share deeper emotions with only one or two really close friends. In this extreme situation though, she puts on a *façade*; conceals the truth even from her friends. While internally she experiences deep sorrow, her behaviour is not authentically lived but socially determined. She is aware that this deception confuses her friends and puts them in an awkward position. They feel inept; not knowing what to say but prepared to listen. Well-meaning, they encourage her to talk about the loss whenever she feels the need but she maintains the silence and the pretence of "normality". In time, Elena becomes aware that she is not her usual self. She realises that she has become more reticent since the loss, "harder", less likely to allow others into her personal space. She has been changed by the loss.

Apart from her own reticence, Elena is also aware that others feel uncomfortable with death and this contributes to her reluctance to share her deeper feelings. Thus, if she experiences the need to talk, she restricts herself to unemotional comments about her brother to spare her friends any embarrassment. Existential awkwardness lingers as she attempts to deal alone with her loss.

Elena feels distressed that she was unable to cry; could not grieve openly for her brother. She questions whether she was trying to be "strong enough" for her parents but realises that her mother had encouraged, even pleaded with her, to give vent to her grief. She herself is aware that crying is not a sign of weakness. Yet she would not, could not weep. Even when she was alone, she could not cry in any sustained manner. This confuses her. Paradoxically, before her brother's death the tears flowed easily; Elena was not a stranger to crying. The slightest conflict with a boyfriend reduced her to tears. But with her brother's death she remained dry-eyed. Although Elena remains confused, she realises that her inability to weep for her brother was not simply an attempt to be strong. Implicitly the feelings related to her brother's death cut deeper; the emotions too overwhelming for tears. What is the place of tears in a situation, especially within a family structure, that is so complex?

While Elena avoided talking about the loss and about her feelings, she derived great joy from listening to "real stories" about her brother as related to her soon after the death by his close friends: what he did; what he said; how he helped others. Because of his zest for life, her brother seldom spent time with the family. The stories as related by others provided a window to the other-side of her brother. Elena latched on to these "happy" narratives and non-shared experiences. They enabled her to hold on to her brother for longer, to remember him more fully. Implicitly, as long as she could hear about him, in some way her brother was still out-there. The stories filled the gaps in the narrative of his life. Listening to others' lived experiences with her brother was a journey of discovery and gave an added dimension to her perception of him. She heard of his caring, helpfulness, generosity, how he had touched the lives of others, and she felt proud of him. However, in time, Elena found it extremely

difficult to initiate discussions with his friends on this level. She realises that when they see her they immediately associate her with their lost friend and their obvious pain silences her even further.

Because her brother was so much a part of her world, Elena discovers that she has assimilated many of his sayings and mannerisms. She is delighted but rather perplexed by a strongly felt sense of her brother-in-her. The way she has incorporated him into her is evident to others, particularly to his friends. She feels as though her brother left her a rich legacy; his “magic” and energy. She loved these traits so much that, not surprisingly, she wants to hold on to them throughout her life. Saying something exactly as her brother would have said it fills her with joy as it reminds her of him and brings a smile to her lips. Her strong identification with her brother enables her to maintain the link to her deceased sibling and to preserve their relationship -- just as the family retain the ties by keeping his belongings intact. Until now, however, nothing has eradicated Elena's fear that in time she will forget his unique way of being and this fills her with deep sorrow.

Reviewing life with her brother, Elena is aware that, with the passage of time, their relationship had changed. Ambivalence characterised it when she was a little girl. They would fight; and he would derive enjoyment from teasing her (his "little sister") and making her cry. Although he was only three years older than Elena, she felt powerless in his company. Later, he forbade her even to speak to his friends. In fact in early and middle childhood, Elena felt much closer to her eldest brother. However, there was never major sibling conflict and for quite a few years before her brother's death, she felt equally close to both her brothers.

As they grew older the gap between them seemed to narrow: she could approach him with a problem; they would occasionally go out together. But their relationship was not without conflict. They fought a lot and did not speak to each other for days, even for weeks. But loyalty and the brotherly/sisterly affection always prevailed. As an adolescent and young adult Elena often angrily resisted her brother's requests for help but would soften and assist him time and again. She had a sentimental affection for him and could not deny him anything - "he got away with murder sometimes". If she could not curb his risky behaviour, then as a loyal sibling she would at least protect him. She became his protector-caretaker: filling in and covering up for him, and if things went wrong, she would pick up the "pieces". She did all this without her brother's knowledge and without expecting anything in return. It was devotion, pure and simple.

Although Elena and her brother never openly expressed their affection for each other, she sensed her brother's love for her. It was only after his death, however, that she realised the depth of his affection for her - not only for what she did for him but also for who she was. Through the remarks of others in whom he had confided, she became aware of the extent of his esteem for her. She learned that he

respected her highly and would have done anything for her. His affirmation of her worth meant the world to Elena and she continues to hold on to the many meanings that her brother had for her.

With the loss of her brother, Elena becomes aware of the fragility of life. She fears death because she has experienced what death is; experienced it firsthand. Although prior to her loss, the death of a young person existed as a possibility (her mother's greatest fear was that she would lose a child; others spoke of premonitions that they would not live to be old), Elena had never seriously considered this. Death had not touched her personally. Death was part of the natural order of life - old people died. Now, after her brother's death, she questions her taken-for-granted attitude towards family relationships. She begins to treasure these relationships, no longer assuming that because they have always been there, they will be there forever. She now knows differently. Life can end at any time. She regrets that she did not spend more time with her brother. She fears losing her parents and others close to her. This is not a pervasive anxiety and does not extend to a fear of her own death/mortality. But she has become more appreciative of time spent with family members and significant others.

Elena experiences her loss as intensely painful, more painful than any other loss (grandmother), that she has experienced, and she withdraws both in her behaviour and in her attitude from reminders of the death. The place of the graveyard becomes taboo. Unlike her mother who goes to the cemetery religiously every weekend, Elena experiences a strong aversion to visiting her brother's grave. She prefers to remember him alive, to hold on to his magic and his energy, rather than to visit the cemetery. For her it is difficult to reconcile his lived image (as reflected in photographs); his intense vitality, with seeing his name on the tombstone...a "slap in the face", obvious, loss-confirming-death-reminder. She evades the dreadful fact of death and holds on to living images of her brother.

Her desire is to remember her brother with joy and not with pain. Elena feels really pleased that she can still view her brother in a positive light, can share a story about him; remember him with warmth and delight. Unlike her mother who remains locked in her grief, Elena wants to remember her brother as the happy and vital person that he always was. She recognises the ambiguity of her emotions because his memory does evoke pain but she is determined that the painful associations with her brother: accident-tragedy-death, should never overshadow the positive associations in her mind of his vitality and the meaning that his life had for her and for others. Implicitly the fact that he died should not take on more importance than the fact that he lived. She resists the negativity of her mother's pain and holds on to these positive images.

More than two years after the death, Elena finally reclaims herself; reconnects with her own career goals and tentatively begins to walk the path that she had initially chosen - but not without some inner conflict. In her decision to pursue her own career, Elena considers her parents' needs and attempts to guard against her decision being self-centred. She feels divided. On the one hand, she experiences the

wanting-to-do-something-purely-for-herself almost as a selfish act; on the other hand, she accepts that she can follow her own path without feeling that she is somehow betraying her deceased brother, or her family, by doing so. She realises that no matter how close she is to her brother, she is separate, and that she owes it to herself to develop further in a field for which she has qualified, and that she finds more stimulating. Elena is aware that if she does not do this, she might regret it later. This provides the impetus for her to move on.

However, the longing for her deceased sibling persists. For Elena, the ultimate happiness would be to be with her brother once again. Although she questions the existence of an afterlife, she holds on to the hope that she will be reunited with him sometime in the future. This provides some comfort and enables her to continue with life without sliding into despair.

6.4 The Findings

The intense experience of losing a sibling through death is a series of over-lapping and criss-crossing stories that are separate from each other, yet also related. Telling these requires more than a single monograph; it demands a book. I have chosen to use five brief "chapters". I start by keeping as close as possible to everyday language, in order to unfold the bigger picture; the comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Differential analysis-synthesis, expressed in the language of psychological science, will follow. Using two languages is necessary to convey more fully what it means for a sibling to lose a sibling:

- 1) one language as close as possible to everyday speech in the life-world of the participants, giving a voice and credence to this loss experience with all its relational nuances; and
- 2) the other, social scientific language and philosophical terminology which will address the theoretical and academic dialogue surrounding sibling loss.

In terms of the use of everyday language, using the second person aims at drawing the reader into the immediacy of the lived experience of losing a sibling. As co-participant, your understanding of what it is like to lose a brother or sister may be deepened, broadened. Hopefully it may even touch you personally and enhance your awareness of the significance and impact of this unique loss experience.

Human experience *per se*, but especially the loss of any significant person, and in this case sibling loss, is a process that evolves over time. We can distinguish moments within the temporal process, hooks which the participants used to structure what was a temporal and existential turmoil, a mishmash of conflicted, contradictory emotions. Loss through death is a complex experience and does not usually follow a well-ordered progression. However, in the experience of the loss of a young adult sibling, the participants' emotions were especially chaotic. Although their descriptions were

temporally organised in terms of a "Before the loss", "At the time of the loss", "After the funeral" and a "Later", there were a variety of inner and external forces which seemed to shape the experience and that were so interwoven as to be almost inseparable. There was also an ebb and flow with the past, present and future and there were dimensions of the experience that did not fit easily into any specific category. Yet as the experience unfolded five distinct *moments* emerged that remained invariant throughout the interviews and which revealed the experience and disclosed its general psychological structure. These include:

- # 1. Adumbration of the loss: Context for the unique nature of sibling loss;
- # 2. Normal grief: The pain of loss;
- # 3. Parents' Bereavement: A "Sickness unto Death";
- # 4. Inner and Outer Silencing: A "Cipher in the Dark";
- # 5. Reclaiming the Self: The long journey.

As for the participants, so also for the researcher, the temporal moments are fluid. For both, a structure can be described which is like a series of snapshots, frozen frames that focus on moments of a process and allow us to adjust what is otherwise a blur so that it can be analysed. The frames are not absolute; they are also not arbitrary.

6.4.1 General Structural Narrative

The following five chapters differentiate the unique texture of sibling loss from other experiences of loss through death. Each chapter is a "moment" of one structural whole: a sibling-loses-a-sibling.

1: Adumbration of the Loss: Context for the Unique Nature of Sibling Loss

Before the loss your life continues routinely within the network of parental and sibling relationships. Growing up with your sibling has not always been easy or smooth. As a little child you played with your sibling and laughed together but you also knew how to provoke, annoy and irritate each other. You cried when he or she teased you and you derived great enjoyment from watching him or her panic when you did something daring or irresponsible. You fought a lot but you also protected, and were there for each other.

The age gap between you and your individual differences created a distance, a separateness. You became polar opposites complementing each other: "compliant"/fiercely "independent"; "fearful"/"fearless"; "selfish"/"considerate"; etc. Parents noticed these differences and responded to them; even unwittingly encouraging and reinforcing them. For reasons unknown to you, they treated you differently to your sibling. Tacitly you understood that this "other" was precious to your mother ... and to your father. Not that it was obvious. Not that they did not love you. But it was *there*. You

sensed this, and may even have felt hurt by it. Yet living together, you knew your brother/sister better than anybody else and felt mysteriously bound to each other.

Later you both gravitated more towards same-age friends. Jealously you held onto your chosen friends, resisting any intrusion into this special relationship by a brother or sister. You entered high school or university and your sibling relationship slipped quietly into the background. But he or she was always *there*. You were never really alone.

Before the death you started to move closer to each other, discovering each other all over again. The gap between you seemed to narrow and you began to share more, discuss problems (real life issues), even occasionally go out together with friends. But you were not really “pals” yet. Possibly you realise that this will come later. Right now you are pursuing your own life projects and goals, readying yourself for the separation from your family and the sibling relationship does not occupy centre stage in your life.

2: Normal Grief: The Pain of Loss

But suddenly your life is shifted through 180 degrees. The unimaginable has happened. The “later” will never come. Your younger/elder brother/sister, a person so much a part of your world, your “other” self, your own flesh and blood - your childhood playmate/rival, companion/adversary, friend/foe, has died. The blow is enormous. It is like a hole in your heart, a veritable amputation of a limb from your family.

Your world is turned upside down and inside out. Before this you were aware of death, but *old people* died. Now death has taken a young vital person: a contemporary; almost a peer, someone from your own generation, from your own family line. Death has touched you personally, on the inside; visited you at home, and shaken your at-homeness in a way that no other experience has done.

The death is a shock. Everything feels distant, hazy and unreal. Inexplicable fear grips you as you try to absorb what has happened. You want to run away, escape the reality of the gaping void created by your sibling's death. You want to veil the transformed world brought about by this radical separation from someone who has-been-there since the *beginning* of “time”, and who you assumed would be there to the *end* of time - at least, to the end of your time. You shut down your feelings, not because you have no pain but because it is too hard to accept that this significant other will no longer be there. Temporarily you need to be numb. You require a barrier to dull your sorrow, a buffer zone within which you can catch a moment of respite.

Many thoughts and questions flash through your mind: "How will the family survive this loss?"; "Why her/him and not me?"; "Why did God allow this to happen?"; "Where is God now that I need Him?"; "Who am I?". There are moments when you fear that you are going insane. Life's wound evokes cognitive confusion and emotional turmoil. You feel the confusion, pain, anger and guilt of someone who has been severely wounded by life but cannot admit to your grief. The feelings are too overwhelming to be faced all at once. You might trigger an avalanche of emotions if you cried from the depths of your heart. You would have to really feel the pain of loss. If you started crying, you might not be able to stop. So, while you sometimes briefly let go a little, for *now* you hold on to your inner pain and keep your grief hidden. Only your body responds to the pain and yields to the reality of death and loss. Grief for the loss of this significant other, significant in more ways than you had ever thought, is inevitable.

3: Parents' Bereavement: A "Sickness Unto Death"

But you have your devastated parents to deal with. The death has touched you not only on the inside but also from the outside-in. Your thoughts turn immediately to them. It is *their child* that has died. Can there be a loss more poignant than that of a parent who has lost a child? Their grief is like a mountain that they cannot climb without support. You see it first when the dreadful news is announced, then at the funeral and especially later as you all try to return to normal day-to-day activities. Now, a protracted period of time after the burial, a host of emotions surface as you watch your parents flounder. You witness their sorrow, sense the persistent heaviness in the home.

Although they are mourning the same child, they grieve in different ways. You feel torn and frightened. You want to scream. You want to shake them out of their pain but then you also want to hold them tight and make their pain go away. But you cannot. No more than they could usher you into adulthood without pain. Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness come in waves. In some deeply significant way, with the death of their precious child, they have psychically died. You yourself are not acknowledged and yet paradoxically attention is focused on you. You become the only one that can fill the emptiness created by the loss of their beloved child; perhaps the only one that can coax them into a world of new beginnings and new life. You sense the responsibility and cannot turn away.

Dimly you realise, however, that no matter what healing might take place, the family will never be the same again. For your parents it has been a phenomenological death of self. For them their worst fears have been realised. The most unnatural of disasters has been visited on them: they have outlived the child that they welcomed into the world, cradled, raised and, in one form or another, have let go of. But *this* "letting go" is unimaginable. A *part* of each of them was buried with your dead sibling. Now everything of him or her is *gone* and yet a *part* of them still "lives" on ... everything has fallen *a-part*.

From the point of view of *now*, it does not seem possible that they are going to let go. Not this time. This time they are going to cling with all their might. There can be no easy or premature mourning of this death that has struck at the very heart of life. They will resist any easy sliding of meaning into the zone of the "forgotten". You are stuck with their refusal, a refusal that entraps and binds you.

Even if some healing takes place; edges towards resolution and then tentatively moves towards acceptance, from now on everything will be different. If the day should ever come when they finally might be able to see the sun breaking through the clouds, it will be such joy, a veritable miracle. But for now, a dark hole, unable to be thoroughly filled, will remain - a cold, hard fact of life. There is nothing that you can do to change this.

You see all of this. Not all at once or all the time, but you *feel* it incessantly. In response, your emotions shoot out. Sometimes, focused, they flash in a ray of anger, irritation, frustration. Most of the time you are filled with compassion, feel the guilt of the "survivor". Your emotions swirl rapidly around as in a whirlpool, then, sucked back to the centre, they proliferate and reappear later with even greater force. Even if you tried, you could not capture one single emotion in order to put a label to it. Only away from them can you feel some respite but, paradoxically, all the emotions go with you. You realise that from these relationships, and from their grief, there is no escape. You must be there. You experience a poignant imperative. You cannot turn away from the instinctive need to be there for them. Nothing in you is programmed to let go. It is a "work", an accomplishment, which must begin afresh, this time not in a natural, gradual way but more determinedly, forcefully; more painfully and traumatically.

4: Inner and Outer silencing: A “Cipher in the Dark”

And you still have your own individual pain to bear. Whatever your parents are feeling, or whatever pain is carried by your dead sibling's spouse, child, lover, friend, their loss is recognised as a more *direct* blow. They have lost a child, a wife/husband, a father/mother, a lover, a friend. Has the cruel blow dealt to you been softened in any way by these significant others who took the more direct knock? Your mind-body screams: 'No!' Yet your grief seems like a molehill. It doesn't even have a geography that can be identified on the map. In the broader picture of things, your grief does not count for much. Out-side of you, your grief does not even exist.

It is only within your own experience, within your own consciousness, that it is *real*. Although your heart is breaking for your "gone"/"lost" childhood companion; although "gone" for you are your parents in their old sense; although “gone” is also a part of your *self*, still in this predicament, no one even notices you. You are an "outsider-onlooker". You are a cipher occupying a vacant/vacated space in the complex equation of all these relationships.

Henceforth, your alienation is complete. You are surrounded by people, but you feel alone. Your grief becomes a personal and private matter. You need the space to sort out your own emotions but you also cannot upset or hurt others who are already swamped with painful emotions. You cannot embarrass friends who, although well meaning, are not comfortable with death and grief. You keep yourself busy and maintain a façade of “normality” while inside you the hurt, sadness and missing lingers on. What you feel inside and what you show outside are very different. Sorrow and living memories of your dead sibling become your constant companions, keeping the past alive and the terror of absolute loneliness at bay.

5. Reclaiming the Self: The Long Journey.

It is only much later that you are able to break through the silence and self alienation, give in to your pain, enter the emptiness and truly mourn your loss. It is only much later that you are able to relieve yourself of the burden of your grief by *openly* sharing with someone (a husband/wife, therapist, or significant other outside your deep sorrow) something of the tormenting emotions and the trauma of your loss experience. Still the fear of death and loss of significant others follows you like a shadow through life. It fills you with deep anxiety while simultaneously making you more deeply aware that *relationship* is the most essential part of life - whether it is the relationship with parents, brothers or sisters, friends, or with God. With all the intensity of a heart that *knows*, you realise that life is short and that every moment with a loved one must be treasured.

Without consciously working at reorganising your sense of self, you realise that you have been changed by the experience - that you have assimilated many of the qualities that you originally thought belonged exclusively to your sibling. Now you recognise in your “I-ness” both strength and vulnerability, fearlessness and fearfulness, that you can be responsible and sometimes daring, independent and also compliant, considerate as well as selfish.

You are on your way to "working through" the loss when you stop fighting death and the changes that it has brought about in your world. When you can let go of the anger, guilt and hurt and live your life without feeling that you are betraying your parents or your deceased sibling by doing so; when you manage to reconcile the past with the present and begin to face the future once again.

But with all of this you remain constantly aware that nothing can take away the pain of your sibling's physical absence in this world and that ultimately, because of this loss, you will have to confront the terror of absolute loneliness in later life (particularly as an only child).

6.4.2 General Psychological Structure

I will now elucidate, break down, the ideas inherent in the above five chapters. Then I will put it back together again and present a structural synthesis of the general phenomenological psychological description of the experience of sibling loss.

It is important to keep in mind that the death of a member of a family impacts on every other member. It is essentially a *relational* phenomenon and cannot be divorced from the family and the wider social context. In the lived experience, the loss of a sibling and the loss of a child are closely intertwined, overlap, and frequently tumble into each other. They cannot be viewed as absolutely distinct but as interwoven as the following structure reveals.

In order to demonstrate the psychological insights gained from the individual experiences of losing a brother or sister through death, examples from the naïve descriptions will be cited that support the general themes to be discussed.

1. Sibling loss is a transformative experience and grief over the loss is long-lasting.

The loss of a brother or sister reveals itself as a profound and lasting transformation of existence and the impact of the grief over the loss is long-lasting. Because their lives are intimately connected to their deceased sibling, and are also closely intertwined with that of their parents, the participants experience their lives as being permanently changed by the loss. Everything that is familiar changes. With the loss, the surviving sibling's earlier way of existence is shattered and the survivor continues on life's journey without someone who has been part of her world from early childhood and who, under normal circumstances, would have been part of her world until old age.

In the present study not all the participants were at the same place in their journey. Elena is still in the relatively early stages of her loss experience and although she is tentatively moving on with her life, the intense longing for her lost brother is still powerfully present. But even for the respondents whose loss occurred many years ago, the journey is ongoing and the primacy and trauma of the experience is still present. In moving through her profoundly painful experience, Cathy has succeeded in reconciling herself to the fact of the death and has let go of the pain of her mother's hurtful and alienating behaviour following the loss but she continues to struggle to confront the full reality of the loss and the meaning that her brother's death has for *her*. Dia has also been through the struggle, has reflected deeply on her loss experience and has moved on with her life but emotionally she still feels bound by unspoken rules to maintain the family oneness and to spend all special occasions with her parents.

- *Sibling loss is a transformative experience:*

Elena (19/20/65): "Ja, and from there...my mother's *never* been the same person; my father's never...our *lives* have never been the same. We're just not the same people, you know. It...it changes you a lot...I've become a lot harder...generally in life"; "...religion-wise it's changed me. I used to be a lot more religious..."; "I'm more closed now than I was before. I don't let people into my space easily...like personal space".

Cathy (56/61): "I think it has [strengthened me]. I hope it has made me a nicer person and not embittered me like it did to my mother"; "...and *that* I think is a very, very important aspect of [the loss]...the mother's reaction towards...the children that stay behind. *That* perhaps is even more important than how the child feels about the loss. To me, I think it meant...because it became an abnormal situation."

- *The impact of the loss is long-lasting*

Cathy (1/33/41): [Thirty-nine years after the loss] " It feels as though it just happened yesterday ..." ; "...and going back to how I feel about (the loss)...I still grieve about him as he was when he died...a young man, you know, and he was a very good-looking young man..."; "I also have a little parcel of his with...with his watch and...but I've never opened it. It's still there, it's still closed. I move with it wherever I go and..and..you know...as I say, *running ... running ...*"

Dia (18/34): "After that, for me...for a very long time, it was terrible the way my parents handled it" (the loss); " Still today there are unwritten rules that we will, more often than not, be together on Christmas (Day)... To tell the truth, I have spent only two Christmases away from my parents...there's no explanation as to why you are not available...why you would do your own thing, that would make it 'softer' (easier) for them".

Elena (9) "...I know even up to today...the pain is still there..."

2. The loss of a sibling shakes the sense of wholeness, rootedness and at-homeness.

Before the loss of their sibling the participants' existence continued routinely within the network of parental and sibling relationships. A sense of belonging; of wholeness, rootedness and at-homeness allowed the participants to face the world and to move into the future. Although the primary parental bonds and early sibling attachments did not always or consistently provide a secure sense of being protected and of being "held", nevertheless, they were always there and the support and affirmation from one or other family member offered the necessary respite, affirmation and security.

As young adults their lives started to go off in different directions to that of their siblings, and their brothers and sisters did not consistently occupy centre stage in their lives. Yet siblings were *there*, an integral part of their world and symbolically still in the "same boat" as they moved through the various transitions in their lives. Even with their age differences, and the hierarchy in the family (eldest, middle child, youngest), the sibling relationship was more or less egalitarian. While an elder/younger brother or sister may have held a special place in the family, in the relationship with the sibling the core identities were revealed and they were both still subject to the struggles that all humans face. The participants became impatient, angry and annoyed with their siblings but their differences frequently co-existed with an underlying affection for, and loyalty towards, each other.

Despite the conflict which characterised their early relationship: their individual differences, the age gap and the established family alliances ("favourite child"; "mother's child"; "father's child") which in some instances separated them and sometimes seemed to keep conflicts alive, as they matured their relationship started to change once again. By young adulthood, sibling rivalries and the competitiveness of early childhood had diminished and a more egalitarian relationship emerged. Most of the participants felt that the gap between them and their sibling had narrowed. Cathy and Elena both began to move closer to their siblings and a different kind of relating (although still a fluctuating and ambivalent one) started to emerge before the death. Although Dia's relationship with her sister remained polarised and they had not yet reached the closeness that she witnessed between her friends and their sisters, she and her sister still maintained close contact with each other and she assumed that there would be greater closeness and more sharing in the future.

- *Affirmation and support from one or other family member offered respite and security:*

Cathy (31/73): "...She (i.e. mother) was a very hard woman...she was always very, very hard on me...never on my brother...it was a strange thing..."; "I had a terrific relationship with him (i.e. father)...if it wasn't for him I think I would have...it was very, very trying after my brother died".

Dia (58): "...He (i.e. father) was a lovable person...the day when he died I realised...that the one person who *un-con-di-tio-nally* always...you know, it is the stupidist thing...would always take my side and look for excuses for me, is no longer there (laughs). My mother would...um ... first sort everything out...first find out whose fault it was...always think I was at fault, "because I know my children well!..."

Elena (35/36): "...he (i.e. brother) loved me a lot for what...okay, obviously for [who] I was, but also for what I did for him..."; "...he respected me a lot and that...means the world to me".

- *Feelings of sameness and difference in the sibling relationship created a sense of wholeness:*

Cathy (49): "...You know he was there. He was there at supper and we [both] got into serious trouble if we weren't home in time for afternoon tea, you know. "

Dia (1/2): "...You know that was the difference between the personalities. I was much more daring...she would not take chances... So she had the privilege of being afraid; I did not because I am a loud mouth...I pretended that I was not scared. So if it was dark, I had to walk with her, you see, but it was my choice just as much as it was hers. So there is no resentment if I say this. Not at all. I almost want to laugh about it (laughs)...I realise we...had certain roles...I thought I was proving something and she...well she enjoyed the safety which naturally was very important to her...we were small then..."

Elena (52/35): " Ja (yes), I was always covering up for him...I was always...picking up [the] pieces and like covering up for him...I just did it...I'd always let him go and get away with murder sometimes..."; "...every time he'd ask me for something, I'd tell him, 'This is the last time I'm doing it! ... and the next time he asked me, I'd do it again... That's the kind of soft spot I had for him, and I would always tell him, 'No! I'm not going to do it!' and...ah! ... we used to fight a lot as well, you know. Not speak to each other for like... (laughs)...like a week or something (laughs) and then, ah, it was fine ...ja...it was fine."

- *The closeness-distance dimension of the sibling bond fluctuated over time:*

Cathy (43/48/49) : " ... And yet he was much younger than I was [5yrs]. We were never ... just about a year before he died, we started to become friends...On looking back, we had very little in common. We did very little together..."; "...I think my mother was always very protective of him and she sort of kept...each one had his own little world, you know..."; "I can't remember...ever being really close...until he grew to a young man...until he was about 17/18 then we started chatting and...and I started picking him up wherever he was in the afternoon in the car..."

Dia (40) : "...we were still too far apart at that age, that four/five years, and we were too different, that, she really was a pal to me. I realise that it would have come later."

Elena (51/53) : "...although when we were younger, with my oldest brother I was...we were much closer...I was *very* close to my oldest brother but...that changed...there wasn't...I don't think anyone was closer than anyone else for quite a few years before his death"; "...he loved to tease his little sister, you know. Especially when you're little...when you're younger...[2-3 years] it's like more of an age gap. I think lately it wasn't that much of an age gap. We'd go out more, you know, together, whereas before it's like, 'Don't speak to my friends!' and that";

3. With the loss, the self is confronted by a void that threatens to fragment self and family.

With their sibling's sudden death, the participants are ripped from the familiar order. An order which had to a large extent shaped their sense of self and oriented them both spatially and temporally in their lived world (eldest, youngest). They feel the pain of the gaping void created by this devastating loss. The emptiness persists, more keen at special times of the year but always *there*. The loss spreads and the participants live the very theme of loss. Physically leaving the place of suffering does not mitigate the pain. Their deceased sibling's absent "presence" is everywhere.

From the moment of the announcement of their sibling's death, everything changes. The participants' whole sense of being in the world and their perception of the world is shaken. Not only do they experience themselves in a new way but others around them are also altered. The whole context for relating changes and some participants experience a period of reduced functioning in the world and poor health following the death.

Interrelated roles and functions in the family are also disrupted and reorganisation is inevitable. The space that had been filled by the deceased sibling (mother's supporter; manager of the family business; etc.) is empty. Although not immediately apparent, roles and tasks, responsibilities and expectations shift, leaving the participants who had come to know themselves in a certain way within the family structure facing the question: "Who am I?". This was particularly difficult when the participant was left as an only child who was the only one that could fill the empty space. Dia who was the second child and who became an only child after the loss, was acutely aware that she was the only one that could take up her elder sister's role. She could not deal with this dramatic role change immediately. No longer able to enjoy the independence/freedom that she was accustomed to, she struggled to hold on to her familiar sense of self. Although Cathy, who had been the "eldest" (but second-born), was accustomed to taking responsibility within the family, she too struggled with the

role change of becoming the "only" child. Elena, who was the only one still living at home, also felt the weight of responsibility of the "only" child.

- *The world feels hollow and empty without the deceased sibling; evoking intense pain:*

Cathy (18) : "...and it became a weird existence because he was so much part and parcel of our lives yet none of us acknowledged him. We never spoke about him. You know...everyday...I mean we'd sit down to eat and we would all cry and no one would acknowledge why we were crying."

Elena (4/5/6) : "...He was...if he wasn't here at home, he was always talked of, you know. We'd like sit down if he wasn't here and we'd discuss Tom, you know. It was always about him and what he did...so when he was gone, it...it changed our lives totally. I think up to today, it's... ja, it's not nice"; "...Obviously Christmas and things like that are like...terrible...they're dreaded...ja...I think the last one we tried to go away from...the home because we always used to be here and stuff, but...um... also it doesn't work; "Ja, it's...a *hole* ...in our hearts, in our lives, in our..."

In some instances it was the emptiness of lost opportunity that created a gap and elicited pain:

Elena (37) : "You know they're always *there*...you take for granted that they're always *there* until...And I think...ja...I would have *loved* to have spent more time with him but I guess that's impossible..."

- *The loss is an embodied experience and some participants go through a period of reduced functioning in the world:*

Cathy (77/78) : "...But I do think there is a link between your health and sorrow"; "I think it became a very low...um...intellectual period; a period where I cannot remember anything happening. It was a stagnant period...um...[for] years... "

Elena (43/57) : "...I felt very weak, you know, like the way I looked. I'd lost a lot of weight, you know..."; "I know like...my entire like being...it's not been good...*as* good...I'm not looking as healthy, not been as healthy, what shall we call it...if you're not like psychologically fine, it like shows on you...and a lot of stress. I lost a lot of hair...initially".

- *Interrelated roles and functions in the family are also disrupted signifying a need to fill the gap:*

Dia (29/49) : "She was the elder sister with a sense of responsibility. Um...Which of course left me more *free*..."; (After the loss) "Because I was the only one that was left and I...half realised that their (i.e. parents') support for each other was not so good and I was for them...a sort of catalyst between them...for me it was...*terrible* to have to go and tell them that I wanted to move into a flat".

Elena (2/3) : "...I think him being...well very [involved]...he was very involved in the [family] businesses. I think on that side of things, it's taken a big knock...because of that emotional side. Because the last shop we opened was his...the shop was basically for him. So like *me* working in *that*, I did in a way for *him*..."; "...well...look, because it was obviously a great shock to us all...I felt I needed to help the family through it...like support the family...my mother..."

4. An emotional struggle characterised by ambiguous, paradoxical and confused emotions, evolves.

For the participants, the loss of their sibling set in motion a whirlpool of painful, bewildering, conflicting, and frightening emotions not unlike those experienced by others who suffer the loss to death of a loved one, but amplified by the acute awareness of their parents' intense grief. From the moment of getting news of the death until well after the funeral, the emotions, raw, fluid and shifting, came in waves. At times the feelings flooded the participants' consciousness, at other times they disappeared only to resurface again much later.

Thrown into unprepared mourning the participants initially felt shocked, dazed, numb, and distant. Temporarily they needed to be numb, to shut down their feelings, not because they had no pain but precisely because the feelings were too intense and confusing. Not all participants were numbed in the same way or to the same degree. Initially, Cathy was almost paralysed by her emotions and feelings of fear alternated with a strong sense of unreality and confusion that persisted for a long time. For Dia, the fear revolved around acknowledging her vulnerability, losing control of her emotions and breaking down completely; while Elena closed off her feelings and, realising that her parents were totally immobilised by their grief, immediately took control of practical arrangements. The shock, fear, and confusion were particularly severe and long-lasting when the participant was somehow involved in the circumstances of the death, or felt in some way responsible for what had happened (as in Cathy's situation). However, for all the participants, closing the self off from feelings meant that they could cope with the immediate demands while everything and everyone around them was collapsing.

All the participants felt that a sudden, unexpected death and particularly the death of a young person, was more traumatic and difficult to accept than that of an old person who had "lived his life". Thus, while the participants were cognitively aware that their sibling had died and understood the irreversibility of death, emotionally this reality could not be faced or accepted immediately. Attempts to avoid confronting the reality of what had happened, to evade the gap, to "withdraw", "run away", to "block" the painful emotions persisted even after viewing the body and attending the funeral. One way of containing the confused emotions was by keeping occupied. Holding on to familiar activities provided a buffer against the pain of loss. Feelings of helplessness were replaced by a sense of control over, and order in, their world and it is only in retrospect that the extent of the emotional struggle becomes apparent.

- *The emotional turmoil and cognitive confusion could not be dealt with immediately or all at once:*

Cathy (39/67) : "You know it is like a whirlpool of all kinds of things...and...after it sort of happened, little things would come up... They'd surface a bit and then they'd vanish in the water

again, that type of thing, and one's ability to cope later when they appear a little longer, you know, and before you suppress it again and hide whatever you're feeling... You can deal with it a little bit and then off it goes again...you close it up..."; "...death is such a tricky...and the sorrow that comes with it...it's many faceted. It isn't just sorrow...there's so many aspects to sorrow...it's like a whirlpool. Something comes up, then...whew! It's away. And then a few months later or a few years later, something else pops up and um..."

Dia (67) : "...because of the nature of my personality...I cannot cope...or I cannot *give in*... 'admit'... that's the word! I cannot *not* cope because as soon as I do this then I collapse completely...For a while I must...my mind must take over rather than my emotions. I mean I must think myself through this...come through this cognitively..."

Elena (70) : "...It was very difficult. I remember I wouldn't cry...at all. My mother like: 'Please cry'. I'd say, 'I can't. I cannot cry'. I don't know why, what, how...and if I did, I did for a little bit all by myself or maybe...on the *odd* occasion with a friend and for so short...I don't know. I *couldn't* and I don't know what it was...I don't know if it was being strong enough but it doesn't mean that you're not strong if you cry...but I just...I couldn't cry. I don't know why..."

- *Initially there was shock, fear, disbelief and confusion where closing self off from feelings provided some stability:*

Cathy (2/3/4) : "... And there was this absolute fear ... I didn't know what was going on ... there was this absolute disbelief, you know. You can't think..."; "And I sort of half-slept on this couch"; "...and eventually my mom and dad...arrived at the hospital and...I don't even know what time [it was] ... And from that moment everything became sort of hazy...It is as though the reality of what happened ... made me feel totally...um...out of touch."

Elena (26) : "...but...it's been a fight, a struggle, you know. It's an emotional fight, you know. You always try and ...block it...not...I won't say block...ja, in a way it might be blocking it. I don't know if I blocked it or dealt with it. I actually...still don't know to this day. I don't really know..."

- *Withdrawal and attempts to evade the pain of the reality of death persisted for a long time:*

Cathy (36/37) : "I think they left the coffin open in the church. I think it was done purposely so that the reality could hit us...And, I think, there it hit...home. That...*here he was!* ... that it's over...But still...I can still remember long after the funeral, waking up and thinking it definitely didn't happen, you know, that he's here...and then listening for the noises he used to make in the morning..."; "I think the pain of the whole situation: that it's a closed thing, there's no longer that person, you don't want to accept and you actually...you look ahead at the pain that is lying ahead, do you understand? ...and that not wanting to accept...that you think it hasn't happened...it couldn't have happened, so that you don't have to go through all that..."

Dia (10) : "Then we had the funeral and that...that was terrible! But my experience of that was that I could cut out. There were people who took responsibility for my parents...and, mercifully, I could then withdraw..."

- *Keeping occupied helped to contain the confused emotions:*

Dia (13/75) : "...But then I had to finish my thesis. So I had something that I needed to get to work on immediately which also, in a way, made it easier"; "...I could keep myself busy. I had an objective and you must please leave me alone because I am...busy...The door of my room was closed and they left me alone because I was busy...and I think in the process of finishing the thesis I...but I still found time for myself and the storm outside...uh...I didn't have to see it all..."

Elena (42) : "...I don't know, I felt...I felt really strong...I don't know how I did it, especially close to when it happened, because ...it was, 'I'll take it and I'll deal with it!' (i.e. brother's business)...from... [writing] my Honours exams...I didn't write the first one because it was a week

after his death, I wrote all the others and I passed them and then I went straight into the shop and then I just took it in my hands, 'Come I'll do it!', you know, because...obviously because of the emotional loss my parents couldn't deal with things..."

Although not expressed immediately, the participants experienced some anger following this radical transformation of their world. But it was not only anger, there was also fear and a sense of helplessness and deep hurt. There was anger at God, a certain disillusionment with Him for allowing such a terrible thing to happen; at parents for their tendency to idealise the deceased child, and frustration and fear that their parents' unremitting grief could destroy the one or other parent, shattering what remained of their family. The participants' angry protests were simultaneously efforts toward recovering the equilibrium, security and connectedness of their pre-loss existence and an attempt to make sense of their transformed world. In retrospect, and with deepened understanding, the anger and irritation melted into compassion as the participants realised that their parents could not get over the loss.

- *Feelings of anger erupted as fear and insecurity intensified:*

Cathy (23/65) : "Then they started going to the cemetery every Sunday. And it became an absolute ritual...eventually I couldn't stand the emotional strain...My father was losing weight, my mother was looking terrible and one day they came back and I said to my mother: 'This has got to stop! You're killing dad...you've got other things that you must look [to]...'"; "...I *am* angry with my mother. Her reaction and her insensitive behaviour towards me and I think that is why I never ever told her that I told him (brother) to use the car. Because as it was, I was *suffering* her behaviour and I could never... relate that..."

Dia (19/70) : "...It almost went to the point of idolatry, you know. So much so that at one point I said: 'You are remembering incorrectly!'...It just factually irritated me...the twisting of facts because that person was no longer there...it's too silly"; "And that was another thing... religion. Fortunately at one point I got as far as to realise that I *was* allowed to be angry. I could but then...I had to tell Him that. That was a great relief...[that] the...[One]...who...has the power has done the wrong thing and, therefore, I hate Him', and things like that...and those are things that I had to [work out] for myself...it also did not happen immediately...For a long time I felt: 'yes, I'm annoyed and it's a very stupid thing to let happen. It was unnecessary. Look at how many lives have been messed up and people who...' But for me it was a very, very big relief to realise that I may be angry as long as I could say *directly*, that: 'I am angry. Help me sort it out'".

- *With deepened understanding, anger and irritation melted into compassion; forgiveness:*

Cathy (53) : "...looking back I realise that it was emotional instability...I mean, you lose three children, you can't be absolutely normal can you? I don't think so and I think I experienced it...You *cannot*...but as she's grown older...let me tell you, she was hard until she was about eighty five. Only now between eighty-five and ninety has she mellowed and I think it was also her way of sorrowing."

Dia (24) : "At one stage I was irritated with my father because he threatened me in a way, in the sense that he...wanted to drag things out of me about which I did not want to speak...He wanted to talk about it and I didn't want to then...he created situations that were a threat to me. And I wanted to get away. And the more I wanted to...you know we both felt...Oh, shame! It was terrible. Shame! (expression of sympathy/care for parents). It was terribly bad for them..."

Elena (58) : "...and especially seeing your parents like that...you don't want to accept it like that...I don't want to accept them as they are...because...it *hurts* to see them like that...[it hurts] a lot. I don't blame them (i.e. parents) for it, you know. I don't blame anyone for anything ... it's like, no one *did* it, you know. It's just that's the way it's become, you know..."

6. In the awareness of the parents' profound grief, there is a desire to sustain them and prevent further fragmentation.

With the loss of a significant attachment and the feeling that everything that is familiar was slipping away, there was a powerful desire to sustain primary attachments and prevent further fragmentation. The participants were acutely aware of their parents' deep pain and without exception felt that their parents' grief was far more severe than their own. They acknowledged the closeness of the parent-child bond as an existential "given" and recognised that the severance of this bond demanded deep and profound mourning. As they witnessed their parents' intense pain, particularly that of their mother, their own grief paled into insignificance. In some sense the participants almost experienced a sense of relief that they did not have to live out such extreme suffering - the sorrow *particularly* of a mother who has lost her child.

In seeking to sustain their parents, the participants veiled their own grief, made few demands on their parents and attempted to shield/protect them from additional pain. Supporting them through this devastating loss, either through actively being there for them as much as possible or by ensuring that they had adequate external support, became their immediate goal.

Living at home and witnessing their parents' incredible hurt and the ways in which they had been changed, the participants felt totally overwhelmed. They became anxious that the family would not be able to survive this extreme loss experience. The shock of such profound and persistent suffering was not only frightening and confusing, but also added another dimension to the participant's lingering sadness, a fear of a further collapse of their already depleted world. With the death of their sibling they had lost a significant attachment, now they feared losing what remained of their family; losing all sense of rootedness and the last vestige of their brother or sister.

Their parents' grief was experienced as a poignant imperative; a heavy responsibility. They must be there for them. Although the participants reported that their parents did not overtly make any demands on them, yet they experienced their parents' pain as a *demand*, an appeal, from which they could not turn away. However, it was only retrospectively that they realised how incredibly stressful this sense of responsibility for their parents had been. Participants who after the death of their sibling were left as only children, felt even more bound by a sense of responsibility to be there for their parents.

However, persistent lingering in the parent-child relationship stood in opposition to the readiness to separate, was restrictive and delayed the natural developmental process.

- *There is an acute awareness of parent's pain and own grief is diminished by comparison:*

Cathy (68) : "If I look back as to how I feel about my brother's death...it was a great loss for my parents, not for me. They've lost a child..."

Dia (27) : "Very often, I have often wondered, if it were my child, how I would handle it".

Elena (68) : "And I'd hate to obviously like feel the intensity of my mother's pain, you know what I'm saying...um...Obviously when I have a child of my own then I'll understand what it would be like but..."

- *In the desire to protect and sustain parents, the self is put aside:*

Cathy (17/22) : "Ja, and then when the funeral was over and we tried to get back into normal life... I tried to protect them from songs that he (i.e. deceased brother) was very fond of, you know."; "...I was at home and I stayed at home. I made a pact that I would stay with them for three years... and I stayed for three years and tried to protect them."

Elena (21) : "...and I tried to feel stronger...especially for my parents...because...I guess I love my family a lot, you know. We are very close ...I've tried to be there for them as much as I can, you know."

- *With the threat of further fragmentation, fear and insecurity intensify:*

Cathy (25) : "You see...I myself was feeling terribly...I was scared for what was happening to them...seeing them deteriorating. I couldn't understand what was going on because it (i.e. the grief) just continued and continued..."

Dia (15) : "...I think my parents, for me, were the greatest [concern]"

Elena (39) : "Ja, I think the worst part for me is to see my...my parents like this, you know...it like hurts me and it upsets me, you know, because it's...ugh! ... it's just not the same people, you know, and it's just really sad...it's really, really sad...it feels like I've lost my...not *lost* my family but, it's ja, definitely changed us in many ways...Ja, ag!"

- *Feeling responsible for parents connotes a poignant imperative:*

Dia (56/61) : "...I felt, you know, now, in a way, I must carry these people (parents). They did not have the energy really to...I did not ask [for] much ... I actually asked them to leave me alone, you know..."; "...And it places *demands* on you...and I assume that if there are more children, then the children could half *understand* each other, you know, and almost jointly bear the ...thing of: 'Let-us-help-mom-and-dad-cope'...but it did place demands on *me*."

Elena (61/62) : "It was nice on holiday...although I spoke *about* him a *lot*, you know...it wasn't as if...I went there and I just blocked him off... He was very much a part of that...but...I think maybe not dealing with my parents, you know, it was like...like a *weight* off my shoulders"; "Although I don't mind doing it and I do it with the greatest of ... [very willingly] but it is...a... responsibility ...they really do not ask for anything...[but] you know.. Like I'm me. I just want to [help]...if I can..."

- *Lingering in the primary relationship impedes personal growth and movement in own grief:*

Cathy (72/75) : "...I perceived it as a mother that is over-possessive. That's how I felt about it. She never gave me freedom to express opinions or express ideas..."; "...only these last few years that I

felt...I am free of...to a certain extent confined...whole thing put on me...As though I'm starting to be my own person, not...trying to be someone else's person..."

Dia (32/34/63) : " They definitely did not understand why I wanted to leave home and it was *terribly, terribly* traumatic for me to say this...to get myself so far as to say, 'Now I am going!"; "I just wanted to get away a little from the clinging because the holding on became more intense ..."; "Still today there are unwritten rules that we will, more often than not, be together on Christmas. To tell the truth, I have only spent two Christmases away from my parents ...My father is now deceased but...it is the same feeling of...there's no explanation as to why you are not available, why you would like to do your own thing, that would make it [easier] softer for them".

Elena (60) : "...You go [away], you stay for a while and you come back [home] to exactly the same thing...even though you might talk about it (i.e. the loss) and deal with it, it's almost like you have to come back to the exact same thing..."

Not only was it painful to live each day with their loss and in the shadow of the family loss but their parents also sorrowed differently. For some, conflicting feelings arose as they witnessed the tension in their parents' relationship and realised that they were unable to support each other which added to their fear and insecurity, while for others, parents' divergent ways of coping with the loss offered some respite:

- *Parents' divergent ways of coping with the loss dialectically offers respite and intensifies the stress:*

Cathy (72/73/74) : "...she (i.e. mother) was totally irrational...At times she was normal and other times she was totally irrational"; "She became vicious. I think she used me as a sort of a hitting...like a boxer hits at something and she could verbally hit. It was very destructive that's all I know..."; "...and my father was fully aware that there was this but we never really discussed [it]. I knew that he knew and that made me feel safe, you know...the fact that he was aware of it...and he'd wink at me or...he'd, you know, he'd try..."

Dia (21/22/23) : "...and they also handled it very differently, the two of them, which for me was also very...noticeable and which I think, did some damage to their relationship...My father wanted to speak about it continuously...and my mother wanted to keep it very private..."; "I realised that I would have to...that I would rather handle it like my mother did than like my father"; "So there was a conflict which was a little difficult. It was actually...it is... I mean it is both their needs and they had an equal right to deal with it in their way but then there was no support for each other...that was the most difficult of the whole..."

Elena (38) : "Ja, my father is also taking it a bit...he's obviously not as forward as my mom. My mother like...she'll express it more and she'll cry and she'll talk to him more or whatever she, you know, she feels helps her. My father is more quiet about it. It's also hit him hard..."

Participants also differed from their parents in ways of dealing with certain aspects of the grief situation and conflicting feelings arose. Unlike their parents, all the participants experienced a strong aversion to visiting the cemetery and preferred to hold on to living memories of their brother or sister. While Elena recognised that her reluctance to visit the cemetery was an avoidance of death-reminders, for others it was their parents' pain that they wanted to escape from and they withdrew from this ritual:

- *Conflicting feelings were present in respect of grief rituals:*

Cathy (23) : "Then they (i.e. her parents) started to go to the cemetery every Sunday. And it became an absolute ritual...They'd both go off. Sometimes I'd go with...eventually I couldn't stand the emotional strain and they'd go off and they'd come back ..."

Dia (20) : "...and then those terrible regular visits to the cemetery...I very quickly said: 'No thank you!...I will remember her in my mind. I am not going to a *stone*!' You know, that sort of attitude. Terrible! It was very difficult to cope with."

Elena (44/45) : "And I hate going to his grave...I don't see the point of it...I don't want to associate a graveyard or anything with him. I think he was too happy a soul to...to associate *that* [with him] and...I really don't like it. I don't go...I'm hardly involved... Ja, I'll go...like five times a year maybe, or six, but I don't like it. I'd rather look at a photo...I hate to see his name on that cross. I think that's ugh!...I don't know, I guess it hits you in the face, but I don't like it"; "You see my mom is totally different. She loves to go. Every weekend she'll... flowers and the whole thing. Ja...just different..."

Not only did the participants feel their parents' anguish and experience themselves in a different way but their parents also started to relate to them differently. A different relationship was shared.

Participants experienced their parents' attention being focussed on them and yet they felt that they themselves were not acknowledged or noticed. This closeness-distance dialectic was particularly traumatic and confusing when the parents had experienced previous losses as in Cathy's situation:

- *The dialectic of increased parental attention and (benign) neglect:*

Cathy (72) : "I experienced the attention being on me. Ja, my mother's total absorption with me ... but not my father. My father was a sensible man. I mean he also lost three children. But my mother became totally absorbed in...It became a...I don't know. I often thought [that] perhaps she was fearful that something would happen to me but she never expressed it..."

Yet, despite the intensified attention of her mother, Cathy painfully recalls the lack of acknowledgement of her place in the grieving family and of the recognition of her relationship to her brother:

Cathy (64/69) : "I don't think that the parents even realise that the child also has pain..."; "Do you know that on my brother's gravestone...(very emotional - long pause)...on my brother's gravestone...(weeping bitterly) ...I've *never, ever* said this...on my brother's gravestone, it says... "Our Son". I was there shortly after he died when we were washing the gravestone and I saw then, "Our Son" and I put it away, you know. Just filed it away...and it has just come up now..."

Dia, on the other hand, recognised the ambiguity of wanting to be alone while simultaneously needing to feel connected:

Dia (33) : "...They literally *smothered* me, you know. I did not have a chance to breathe because *then* I was the only focus."
And yet:

Dia (77) : "...I...look, I don't say that they were not interested in what I was doing...that's how I experienced it. Perhaps *I pushed them away*...perhaps they got the message loud and clear: 'don't bother me', I don't know. We never really spoke about it...[but]...for me the greatest help was that I had time, that I was not, you know, sucked in [to the parents' grief]. That would have been terrible."

6. "Guilt" and the struggle to retain a weighted sense of self in relation to the lost sibling.

The loss triggered not only an awareness of their deeply entrenched emotional ties to their deceased brother or sister and his/her embeddedness within the family but, as the participants attempted to cope with their fragmented lives, they also struggled to retain a sense of self-worth in relation to the deceased sibling who, within the family, was remembered in idealised terms and whose image remained "frozen" at the time of death. In the process of reintegrating a sense of self in the absence of the fluctuating and vibrant relationship with their brother or sister, they compared themselves with the remembered image of their deceased sibling and in most instances found themselves lacking.

With the loss, the tacit understanding that the deceased sibling was the most cherished or special child became thematic. The intuitive sense that their sibling was more precious was strengthened not only by their parents' profound mourning, their preoccupation with their lost child and their tendency to idealise him or her, but also by the participants' own perception that the deceased sibling was the favourite, or so they assumed because this was never openly discussed with their parents. Only in one instance (Cathy) was this directly stated by her mother and this totally devastated Cathy, leaving her struggling for years to establish an independent sense of her own worth from an abandoned position.

With the tremendous loss and the incredible emptiness that threatened to overwhelm them and their parents, a sense of "guilt" emerged and some participants struggled with these emotions for years after the death. However, this was not simply guilt but an acute awareness of the significance of their sibling in their lives and in the lives of significant others. There was guilt for not taking enough care of their sibling; for being alive when the sibling had died; for not spending enough time with the sibling; for not being "good enough" to care for parents; and for wanting to separate from parents while realising that they desperately needed support. As they struggled to cope with their own fallible human existence and the fragmented lives of those around them, some participants questioned their right to exist. Dia doubted the adequacy of her support for her mother following her father's death and felt strongly that the *wrong* child had died. For Cathy, the sense of guilt arose from feelings of being-to-blame for her sibling's death and was amplified by the knowledge that her brother was her mother's favourite child, thus negating even her entitlement to feel sad; to be "sorrowful". Dia and Elena both experienced deep regret for the lost potential for greater closeness and sharing in the future.

- *Struggle to maintain an independent sense of self-worth in the absent "presence" of the deceased sibling:*

Cathy (24/52) : " But she (i.e. mother) developed a sort of a...after I was born I think she had resentment towards me and it came out even [more] after my brother died and I think that made me...feel even more guilty that my brother had died, you know. That she had lost the one that she was fondest of...that she became very peculiar"; "...and she said, 'I just want to tell you my *favourite* child died! (very emotional; wept bitterly)...You know, when you're in a situation you don't realise that's just her way of hitting back...at her pain...I think that it was devastating ...it was hurtful...for many years I thought I had no worth".

Dia (43) : "Last Monday I had an idea that my sister would have supported her (i.e. mother following father's death) far *better* because they were much *closer* to each other in a way. But still, I don't know if she [my mother] would have experienced it like that ... I don't know. Must ask her! Funny, we don't speak about such things..."

- *Awareness of guilt for not having fully appreciated the sibling in life:*

Cathy (28/29) : "...he was driving my mother's car. There was a lot of guilt I had in that as well because the evening that we went out he was going to go to his girlfriend by bus and I said: 'No!' and I got angry, 'We've got to go to the station and you've got to take us', and because he took the car, he had the accident and *that* caused me guilt for *years*"; "That I worked through...but...I mean, I never told my parents so I haven't worked through that to that extent, you know. I think there is still a lot of guilt wrapped up in him having been in the car".

Elena (37) : "You know they're always *there*...you take for granted that they're always there until ... and I think...ja, I would have loved to have spent more time with him but I guess that's impossible ... but I would have really loved to have spent more time with him...Just so difficult, you know, life gets so busy...and you don't spend as much time with each other as you should...there is not really much family time, you know...it's a lot...'got to work, got to work!'"

- *In the "ghostly" presence of the deceased sibling, feelings of doubt and existential guilt intensify:*

Dia (69) : "You know that I always said...and I definitely felt it...I honestly felt: 'Why not...why *her* and not *me*?' I mean I was not in a relationship. I was not married. I was almost *disposable* at that stage because it wouldn't have been so bad for everybody...what I mean is that they would have felt bad for a time, you know...But I really felt...if I ever felt in the least bit guilty, I felt guilty because it was not me. Because she had just got married, just qualified...it would simply have been logical...I wouldn't say that I really felt guilty...but I know that I had such thoughts...which...if I had to make the plans, I would have made them like this...you know"

Cathy (68) : "... I don't think...I ever acknowledged that I had the right to cry...or I had [the right] to feel sorry for [myself]...because I was *alive*, do you understand? Here I am alive, how can I feel sad? They must feel sad because they've lost...a child...and I think after it happened I went into that hazy world of...you're not allowed to be sorrowful because you're alive and it's their child that died not yours. Do you understand?"

7. A conspiracy of silence contains and conceals the grief.

With the shock and the tremendous pain of the loss, participants initially were unable to share their feelings with anyone. For the participants talking to parents about feelings had not been easy at the best of times. As they witnessed their parents' intense pain conversation became even more difficult, sometimes was highly emotional and was avoided. Some participants felt that words could not suffice to mitigate the pain of such a devastating loss, others feared that whatever they may say could be misunderstood, or experienced as accusatory and hurtful. Caught in the web of silence and the circle of protection and self-protection, the participants maintained the silence. While inside they were

hurting and sad, on the outside they put on a façade and continued with life as "normal". Whatever bonds, whatever conflicts they may have experienced, or whatever secrets they may have shared with their siblings, were sealed off from the outside world. Acknowledging the truth brought the pain. In their relationship to the world their grief did not exist. Only within their own consciousness was their loss real.

Later, open discussion about their feelings was difficult for different reasons: a lack of acknowledgement that they too were hurting; participants preferred to deal with their emotions privately; fear of letting the suffering in and being overwhelmed by the family grief; and the need to protect themselves, their parents and significant others from being swamped by even more painful emotions. In maintaining the silence, bereaved siblings simultaneously attempted to protect significant others and to preserve some stability and integration in an otherwise radically changed world. While some experienced the silence as a painful exclusion and alienation or as an accusation feeding their guilt, and others needed the space because of a fear of further fragmentation, all the participants reported that they were unable to talk about their feelings or give expression to their grief. Where there had been previous losses in the family, the secrecy surrounding death and loss was even more impenetrable and the conspiracy of silence, the agreement not to disclose everything, and not to want to know everything, was intensified. For Cathy, living with the ghostly silence of other lost siblings made grieving and the open disclosure of her secret (i.e. that she had insisted that her brother take the car on the night of the accident) even more difficult and the loss experience more traumatic.

- *Silence and the circle of protection and self-protection:*

Cathy (76/60/31) : "There was very little discussion. As I say, [for] fifteen years we never mentioned his name and each one has developed in his own little cocoon. I think my father took his sorrow into his own little cocoon and my mother into hers. And there was never any open talk or how we felt"; "...it (i.e. mother's behaviour) was strange before my brother died...and I think it was all wrapped up with my sister's death and...I never even knew that I had a sister that had died. I can remember looking through a photo album and saying, 'Who's this?' and my mother saying, 'Oh, it's just a child, a cousin', or something. Never telling me that that is your sister...so she was also running..."; "...My dad also always said that, 'just keep quiet. You keep the peace', but when I was a child I didn't understand this".

Dia (11) : "I cannot verbalise such things immediately...I have to lie on my bed. I need to sort out my thing and then I will...Only when I feel that I can cope, then I'll talk about it but not before. Before that you must please leave me alone...".

Elena (22) : "In a funny way though, like my mother will never like sit down and like [say], 'Are you okay?' and...it's like she knows I'm there...the things I do. But I [also] won't necessarily like phone her up [and say], 'Are you okay?', you know. But, ja, she knows I'm there. The love's there...".

- *A façade contains and conceals the sibling's inner pain that remains hidden:*

Elena (64) : "Initially it was difficult because...I am not the type of person who likes to show my feelings to a lot of people and even though like my friends would come maybe the next day I wouldn't like burst out crying...I'm not that type of person...I think I actually put people in an awkward position because they'd come and I'd like smile at them and [say], 'How are you?' type of thing, you know, and they'd like, 'But hang on...' I mean I would smile at them although inside me you could see that I was hurting and like sad..."

Cathy (14) : "...As I say, I felt like an outsider...ja, sitting outside the whole [thing]...but being very torn as well. And very upset."

Dia (16/57) : "...okay...we did make the arrangements together (i.e. after the death) and that sort of thing but they never, *never* asked how one felt about it. *Mercifully* not. It would have been very bad..."; "I had a friend at that stage but not that I would trust him...it takes longish for me to trust a guy to talk to him about things that I have not yet sorted out...if I haven't sorted it out...emotional trust I find difficult. So with him, I didn't really..."

In addition to the need to protect and be strong for their parents, some participants also recognised as profound the loss suffered by other significant others in their deceased sibling's world (a husband, lover, child, close friends) and this silenced them even further. Caught up in all the sorrow there was no room for the participants to mourn openly or immediately and the conspiracy of silence was maintained by friends and others. For some participants, the question arose as to who-owned-the-pain and even negated the entitlement to mourn.

- *Awareness of the pain of other significant others silences the self further:*

Cathy (68) : "...and I think after it happened I went into that hazy world of...you're not allowed to be sorrowful because you're alive and it's their child that died not yours..."

Dia (37/66/81) : "...My mother realised...[that] to him (i.e. to her sister's husband) she is just as important [as to the family]...you know, for him it was *worse* than for anyone else..."; "It was interesting to me just...after the accident. I often went...to him (i.e. brother-in-law) between classes and helped him with exercises and so on, but I knew that for him [the visits] revolved around *speaking*, you know. It was awful for him...because he and I were actually friends, I had to almost support him as well..."; "...I don't want it to sound as if I considered it to be a tremendous responsibility, but it is just a thing that happens around you and you see people around you struggling, you know, and this does not make your task actually so much easier".

Elena (46) : "And I love to see his friends...especially people he was close to although it's very difficult to communicate with them because when they see me...they obviously [think] 'Tom!', you know...get a picture of him. So for *them* it's difficult as well as for me because I can sense that, even though I would love to sit down and ask them, you know, 'Tell me a story', or ... 'What did he say when you did this? you know. But...Ja...it's not like that unfortunately..."

8. A sense of separateness, loneliness and alienation is experienced.

The loss of a sibling is a profoundly lonely experience. Although participants felt that they were part-of the grief situation yet they were also apart-from it. Immersed in their parents' pain and the grief of others, their relationship to their sibling and their grief did not seem to have a place that could be identified on the map. Their parents were so torn and vulnerable that the participants could not risk letting in the suffering and give open expression to their own grief.

In addition, participants also experienced a distance in their relationships with others and their sense of separateness, of being-apart-from the world of others, was amplified by the behaviour and

comments of others and, for some participants, the lack of acknowledgement that they too had suffered a significant loss. While at times surrounded by people, participants felt very alone in their grief. They sensed the awkwardness of others in being with the bereaved and this isolated them even further.

While some participants felt utterly alone, lost and frightened by the profound awareness of their alienation and others accepted and even welcomed the solitude as a safe space to reconnect with the self and try to make sense of the loss and their chaotic emotions, they all experienced a need to feel connected to their world. Even in withdrawal they all essentially needed to know that they were linked to others.

- *It is an experience of being a- part-of and also apart-from the grief situation:*

Cathy (9/10/71) : "Ja and even at the funeral, I can remember...after the funeral...it was a strange thing...it was as though it was something that happened that was not part and parcel of me...it was something that I was observing...It was terrific pain that my mum and dad had and I was observing all of this"; "...and also no one really owned that I was part of the family...with the result that you think that you are a bit of an outsider...that it is those people that are pained and are so...in sorrow, not you, and I think it becomes...something that you well up inside...because you don't give yourself...you don't really think you have the right...to be emotional about it because it is their *son* that died and it's *only* your brother..."; "...I think there was an awareness of my sorrow but no acknowledgement...not my mother or even my father. I think perhaps they were...I'm just saying that perhaps they were so involved in their sorrow that...but I do know I was outside the whole [thing]...I was an onlooker"

Dia (74/77) : "It really helped that I had my own time...that I could withdraw and that was the greatest help...I think it was really my salvation that...that I was not forced to...to experience this *together* with the family, you know, or to work through it together...that I could do it by myself...But I still found time for myself and the storm outside...I didn't have to see it all..."; "...for me the *greatest* help was that I had time, that I was not sucked in [to the parents' grief]. That would have been really terrible."

- *A sense of distance from others intensifies the loneliness and alienation:*

Cathy (8/55) : "And there was much phoning and people coming and...I can't remember anyone...really coming up to me and saying, 'We're so sad', you know (wept). And I don't know if it was because I withdrew or because, you know, they...it was my mom and dad that lost their child, you know"; "...you fight in the dark, you know. You have this person that is your *mother* that is reacting so *abnormally* towards you and you don't know why. And here you are, you're battling with all this pain and there's no help".

Dia (17) : "And my friends were there (i.e. at the funeral)...they were [there for her]...but as much as you can support someone else when you also have to hand in your thesis...and you are busy arranging your wedding and so on, because they were all, you know, in line...It was not as if I experienced it that they were not there, never, but they had other priorities..."

- *The discomfort of others in being with the bereaved, isolates the sibling even further:*

Cathy (59/70) : "You know what else happened? Our friends couldn't cope with our sorrow so they stayed away... No one ever discussed... They'd say to you, 'Have your parents got over the death of your brother?' you know that sort of thing..."; "...No one ever sympathised or asked me how I felt or ...perhaps they did and then I closed up, I don't know... but I cannot remember anybody, barring that person that came up after the funeral. I remember *that* very clearly so I'm sure I would have remembered other things. I think, you know, I always got the feeling that people *outside* your sorrow couldn't cope with...so what they did, they avoid eventually and I always put it down to that - that they can't cope..."

Elena (23) : "...If I really need to [talk] I will just say something but not really much, you know ...even though I am very close with my friends...I don't want to put them in that position because they feel awkward...I might just say, you know, 'I wonder what my brother would think'..."

- *With the evolving loneliness, the need to feel linked to others remains:*

Cathy (57/58/59) : "If someone had helped *her* (i.e. mother) and helped *me*. Perhaps even after my sister's death, if someone had helped her *then*. But my mother's a very proud person and...I think *that* in many ways caused a lot of extra pain..."; "...with the loss and the guilt and everything else that came with the death of my brother...her very strange behaviour...and of course you don't realise that [it is part of her grief] because you yourself are destroyed...I mean, I was destroyed after that... emotionally"; " So here I was left as an only child and all my friends were running away... and there was no one that I could talk to...or even tell about my mother's behaviour..."

Dia (54/55) : "But now, there is tremendous support in the family and circle of friends for my parents and for me. I think it is also a very...important thing"; "...this friend of my mother's...she was the type of personality that...if there was a *crisis* then she was there...I think she was really a *mother* to me...an *idol* in a way...because she never *spoke* about things, but she *acted*...she was *there*...she was always...that's what she taught me about friendship...that *unconditional* friendship. So she would immediately drop everything and say...'I'm going...' ...and this happened *repeatedly* you know. So that support was there and it was very valuable."

Elena (46) : "Ja, and I love to see his friends, you know, especially people he was close [to] although it's very difficult to communicate with them..."

9. There is a lingering sadness as the future is faced without the sibling.

At some point the focus shifted from anxiety about their parents' bereavement to the meaning that the loss of their brother or sister had for them. There was a gradual awakening of the fuller meaning of the loss of the sibling. Although only one person had died, many different kinds of relationships were lost - their childhood playmate/adversary; the one who affirmed their sense of self but who also challenged their inauthentic social self/persona; someone who although not always present, would always be there for them; that could share in the important events in their lives; that even though they may not have got on well together, were still the only ones that could understand and share in the care of their parents in a crisis or in old age, when ill or dying; etc. With each transition in their own lives the participants felt anew the profound loneliness of their sibling's absence.

Although they grieved silently, the participants remained internally active and they all describe a lingering pain, sadness and missing of their deceased brother or sister. They feel the lack and think constantly of their brother or sister, not only what he or she would be like *now* or the meaning that their relationship would have had in the present, but also the lost opportunity for sharing and support

in their passage through life. They look to the future with sorrow because the sibling cannot physically be there with them.

On reflection the participants realise the significant role that their sibling had played in their lives - not only in terms of how they became who they were and the important lessons learnt in their passage through life, but also how their sibling had alleviated their sense of existential loneliness and affirmed them in many ways. In losing her brother, Elena realised how important his love was to her. In her relationship with her brother she felt accepted for who she was, experienced a sense of worth, of belonging and place and a sense of safety and protection in the world. For Dia the anxiety of absolute loneliness lay submerged for many years only to surface as a terrifying reality much later as she realised that, apart from one's child(ren), the only other enduring relationship is the relationship with one's brother or sister.

- *The sadness and the missing has a lingering quality:*

Cathy (65) : "...I have sadness. I am sad about what happened but I am not angry..."

Dia (40/41/42) : "And with my marriage, I must say that I began to miss her..."; "... At one stage I realised that my friends with sisters, I sort of...it's very nice [to have] support"; "... frequently I wondered what the situation would have been once I had children for example. I wondered how we would...how the relationship would have changed and ... when my parents began to get older, I often wondered how...how she would have seen it..."

Elena (9/56) : "You miss him a lot, you know. I always wonder what he'd be like...what he'd say to me in a certain situation...how our kids would be one day..."; " Ja, and the fact that he like can't be here for like my big days...you know, one day when I get married, I would have loved him to be there...that's really sad...just being *there*...being *him*...I was godmother not so long ago...I would have loved to see...what he'd say"

- *A deeper awareness of the meaning of their sibling in their lives evolves over time:*

Dia (44/53) : "Oh, yes. That is something else that I *now* realise that the anxiety that I had gradually built up of, Whew! You know, at some stage I will be alone...A husband is not really *family*. In the end he has a choice, you know. He has to be there or he doesn't have to, [but] your sister *must* be there, you know...and your child...Whether she feels like going or not, she will still..."; " She was definitely much stronger (than she appeared) and I know that...that I never underestimate little people and I think I base that on her...(laughs)...and quietish people ...you should also not underestimate...I think basically that was based on my knowledge of her strength..."

Elena(35/36) : " I think he...um...loved me a lot for what...Okay, obviously for who I was, but [also for] what I did for him..."; "...I think he...he respected me a lot and that...that means like the world to me, you know. He'd obviously told my friends...'she's the *best* in our family'...she doesn't obviously understand her value as much as she should', you know, and, 'she can just ask for anything and she'll get it'. That's how much...he thought I was like worth...it was nice, you know..."

10. The dialectic of holding on and letting go.

The sibling bond, not only as an extension of the primary parent-child relationship but also as an infinite and intense attachment in its own right, provided the participants with a sense of wholeness/oneness in their world. With the loss of their sibling, the participants felt fragmented and experienced a need to maintain the integration and stability that they had experienced prior to the death. They needed to hold on to their sibling in order to be able to face the future. One way of maintaining this wholeness was by integrating some of the characteristics that they perceived as belonging exclusively to their sibling within themselves. In the search for her brother, Elena was surprised and delighted to rediscover her sibling in herself - a facial expression, an inflection of voice, a phrase as he would have used it, which kept her brother alive in her.

Another way of keeping the sibling close was by taking up some of the roles that the deceased brother or sister had played in their lives or in their parents' lives. Where the participants experienced themselves as very *separate* from their sibling at the time of the loss, the attempt to fill the emptiness remained a yearning. In Dia's situation, qualities of her deceased sister revealed themselves in her own child and she realised that there was the risk that her daughter could become the embodied representative of her sister.

While realising that their sibling could live on only in memory, the yearning for continuing contact is strong and the possibility of being reunited with their sibling provides comfort and hope for some.

- *Recovering the lost relationship:*

Elena (25/55) : "...it's a strange thing ...it's almost as if when he left, he left me with that little magic...I can't explain. He had such an air [about] him, and such ... an *energy* to him that I loved and in a way...he's left me with it. I feel he's left me with it...which is beautiful and I think I'll carry it through with me...Ja, a *feel* of his..."; "...and like...sometimes the way I say something it's exactly like *he* said it...and I *love* it. I just...I *love* it although not everyone will realise it obviously because they don't know him or...but...ag!...I *love* it...it brings a smile to my face...reminds me of him. I won't say it like on purpose...say it because he said it, but obviously from being together and stuff, you pick up things he says, you know, and...it will come out...and 'Wow!'..."

Dia (45) : "...but my daughter, I think, grew into that role...of...you know, we are very close. We have the same sort of humour. We share lots...we are also very different. She is a performer, I would rather, please stand behind the curtain (laughs)...and sometimes she does things and I really thought hard when she...said that she wanted to study music [like Dia's sister] whether I tried...to [push] her in a direction..."

- *The longing for reunion persists:*

Elena (66) : "I don't know if you meet again as souls or if it happens like that, but if you do I'd love ...I'd love...to somehow be with him again if it is, because...I don't know if there are answers but...these are theories. Everyone's got a different theory, you know. I've never been there and come back, you know...but gee, I'd be the happiest chappie! Ja..."

11. Memories are significant, providing continuity and giving new meaning to the loss.

By the time they had reached young adulthood the participants had accumulated a wealth of memories based on many shared experiences with their brother or sister. Although their sibling was no longer present in the physical world, their presence was made possible by recalling and memories played a significant role in the mourning process. Participants latched on to specific memories, at times intentionally replaying these, at other times, being haunted by them. Memories filled the gap created by their sibling's death, brought the past back into the present and vicariously, in imagination, gave them back the future - a future that had been stolen from them by death. Any little memory, however inconsequential it appeared at the time, was recalled and internalised, helping to bridge the gap of absence, reinforcing the familiar sense of self and giving meaning to their sibling's life and death. As the past was returned to and relived, new meanings emerged that provided a sense of comfort and ongoing attachment; the reassurance that although the sibling was no longer present, the relationship had not been lost. Remembering their sibling clearly was essential to movement in the mourning process.

In the review of the past, the dual relationship with the lost sibling was of central importance. Were they close or not close enough? What was the brother/sister like and what did this tell them about themselves? Naturally the way the participants remembered and perceived their brother or sister and themselves (as seen through the eyes of their deceased sibling) depended on what they chose to remember and understand of their sibling's life and death. Shared experiences and memories were repeatedly reviewed and reinterpreted in the light of the present, giving new meaning to the life and death of their sibling. Through her sister's remembered voice, Dia's memory of her elder sister was that she was uncertain, timid, always seeking reassurance. These memories not only affirmed Dia as the strong, fearless, independent one, but also made her aware that perhaps her sister would not have coped well with the hardships of life. Elena recalls her brother's zest for life, how she had assisted him and also how much he loved her. This affirmed her in a positive way (as a good caretaker) and also provided some comfort in the thought that her brother had lived his short life to the full.

Images that remained frozen (either positively or negatively) impeded movement into the future. The absence of memories, as in Cathy's situation where she and her brother had not shared many interests or activities as they were growing up, created an even bigger void or gap. There was a break in the sense of continuity that inhibited relatedness to the world in the present and created difficulties in facing the future. Memories then remained fixed on the pain of the loss and it was more difficult to make sense of the death and to place it in a meaningful context.

For some participants, listening to the stories of others that had been close to their deceased sibling created new memories, making the deceased sibling present in a more immediate, vital and real way.

These lived stories, usually of non-shared sibling experiences, opened a window to the "otherness" of the deceased sibling and gave back "time" that had been lost. They enabled the survivor to hold on to the deceased brother or sister for longer, to remember him or her more fully. The stories filled the gaps in the narrative of the deceased sibling's life by providing a fuller picture of their brother or sister and what he or she meant, and continued to mean, to everyone, including the survivor. For Elena, there was also the realisation that, with the passage of time, memories of her brother would fade, and the fear that not only the person, but also the relationship, would be lost.

- *Memories brought the past into the present and gave new meaning to the loss:*

Dia (39/78) : "And you know for me ... the fact that my sister was who she was, that for me was very easy because...very often I could console myself that she would, in any case, have coped with difficulty with all the difficult things [of life]. And actually she had the best part of her life...and she was married, she had that experience. So, you know, from then on, I think only the more difficult things come...And I thought, Wow! you know. She was ... she was not cheated...Thereafter, I often...I realised that she was sort of spared"; "Thereafter I often wondered how much he (sister's husband) would have dominated her...he can be emotionally hard and that's what I often wondered about..."

Elena (7/28) : "...my brother was a success story for me...like the way he changed and the way he was, like towards the end...the way he felt about himself, the way he showed it to other people...as if he knew he was going...Ja (he lived life fully) but towards the end he changed almost to a better person and a lot of people saw that and that's...that's why I say his was a beautiful story because even though he'd maybe spoken aggressively before...towards the...end, I think it was the last 3 months...he was *soft*, I don't know, he wouldn't shout...he was content with himself...and that's how I see it as a success story"; "...He was a busy body...I think he wanted to live life to the full...he wanted to do anything and everything that he could ... and it almost makes sense, you know, after he'd gone. I don't know ... maybe that's *why* he was like life-hungry..."

- *Memories filled the gap in the present and the emptiness that threatened in the future:*

Elena (10/54) : "...and I think the saddest part is that I can associate *now* more because I can remember him now, you know, because I'm also young...In twenty years time I won't...be able to *see* him as older...you almost feel like you're losing touch and that's very sad..."; "...what I hate most about this is that the older like I get the more distant the memories will become...I won't remember his smile or the way he said something, you know, or...and I think that saddens me most because it's obviously distancing him from me, you know..."

- *Some memories were painful and were evaded or actively forgotten:*

Cathy (34/35) : "...He loved...motorbikes...he'd go on these bicycles...racing bicycles, in groups with the other chaps and um...there are still certain sounds that one remembers"; "...I don't think you...you don't lose [the memories]...sometimes it dims and then [at] other times the things that you can't remember, you remember very well again...I think it depends on the normal mental state or your emotional state, perhaps. You want to remember and what you don't, you don't..."

Elena (69) : "I don't want to look at him as...like a *pain*, you know...it's obviously very confused feelings because it is *that*...but I'd like to remember him...as happy, as he always was...The energy that he had...I just don't want to ever let go of that and just see it as, 'Tom : tragedy'; 'Tom : dead'; 'Tom : bike accident'...I want to see like, 'Tom : happy'...Like he used to hoot a thousand times before he came into the house...that energy that he had...and that's what I want to remember and like

associate with his name...and that beautiful person people saw in him, and the things he did for people and like the way he touched my heart... "

- *Sharing stories created new memories that provided "presence" and bridged the gap of absence:*

Elena (24/29/30) : "...especially in the beginning, I would just like hear happy stories about him and ... 'Ah, he would do this!'...and I'd love to hear things he did...initially I wanted to find out everything about him from all his friends that I didn't know because I obviously knew the 'brother-side' of him, you know...and I wanted to know the friend-side, the boyfriend -side, the every-side of him"; "...any little story, you know. It's like almost like I can latch onto it for some *more*, or like remember him even *more*..."; "So you know, having heard everybody's like little stories...his friends would come up to me...a friend I'd never met...and he says to me, 'You don't know what your brother has done for me'...he did things that really touched people...'You don't know what he's done. He's the greatest person, you know...He's helped me so, so much. I'm so grateful'...hearing things like that, I think that makes me...you know, proud of him ...that's like *real* stories...not just what he wore...where he went...it's like actual...".

With his/her death, their sibling's identity became “fixed” or “frozen” in certain ways not only within the family (usually remembered in glorified terms) but also in the minds of the participants. Death no longer allowed the sibling to exist in the real world of human interaction that could challenge the family's myth or the participants' preconceptions of him or her. The vital, fluctuating, sometimes enmeshed, sometimes conflicted sibling relationship no longer existed. With the incredible loss and the blow to their self perception, most participants were inclined to remember their deceased sibling in absolute terms - as the energetic “beautiful” person, the one that lived life to the full, or the timid, fearful one, the protected one, etc. These fixed or “frozen” images helped to restore a sense of stability in their world: preserved the sibling bond as it had existed and maintained the self in the old sense.

Where the relationship had been a very polarised one (fearless-fearful; daring-timid; strong-weak; etc.), and part of the self had been surrendered to the sibling, the loss of the "other" part of self created a huge vacuum and holding on to the fixed image of their deceased sibling restored a sense of integration. Where there was a close relationship with the deceased sibling, *idealisation* became part of preservation. Seeing the sibling in a positive light brought back the closeness and a sense of stability. Acknowledging the negative could annihilate this significant attachment:

It was only with time that some of the participants remembered their siblings more clearly and also realised that just as they had changed their sibling would also have grown. Letting go of these fixed or “frozen” images facilitated the transformation of the relationship and allowed a new sense of self to emerge. Imagination was critical to the process and facilitated the mourning process.

- *"Frozen images" preserved the relationship as it existed and provided continuity:*

Cathy (33/47) : "I still think...about him...as he was when he died...a young man, you know, and he was a very good-looking young man..."; "I remember him as a young man, not so much as a child. I remember him as a young man."

Dia: (80) : "...You know we were so different...I was prepared to tackle things that she was not... she was really...not very adventurous...not very daring. Not at all. She would *never* go overseas for three months after she had studied (as Dia did) without knowing exactly where she was going, you know, to places, you know, to people..."

Elena:(32/67) : "...and that's another nice thing, you know. He took a girl and, yes, she is a beautiful girl and all, but she had a child and I think [that] a lot of men won't take a woman, as beautiful as she might be, with a child. I know. I discussed that with some of my friends and they were like, 'I don't want the extra baggage', type of thing, you know. And he took her..."; " And I think I am really glad that I can still look on him in a positive light, you know, with a smile on my face...ja, I think that's very nice..."

- *Imagination facilitates a synthesis of a new relationship with the lost sibling and forwards the mourning process:*

Dia (52) : "...a person really wonders what she would be like now. Because you remember her with her young...everything, you know, and if I think of how [much] my personality has changed...maybe not totally...but...very, very...much more patient...I can imagine that she probably [would have] much more self confidence...[she would be] much more assertive even...Interestingly enough I remember that I could *never* see her as a school teacher who could cope with a whole class full of children...And I can't remember that she ever complained that it was unmanageable for her...Now that I think about it, she has grown in my mind...!" (laughs).

12. A heightened awareness of unpredictable mortal existence allows for other important aspects of life to emerge.

For the participants the loss of their sibling was a harsh confrontation with human finiteness. While they were aware that death was definite, the "When" and the "How" was indefinite. Prior to the loss, death was part of the natural order of life - old people died. Now the participants know differently. Death can come at any time. The realisation of unpredictable mortal existence shatters the assumption of enduring contact but also leads to personal growth through reflection and a re-examination of their own lives, personal beliefs and values. Dia questions herself and her faith, and her relationship to God becomes a more personal and meaningful one; one that is lived rather than merely spoken about. Cathy on the other hand, because of her perceived involvement in the circumstances of her brother's death, questions herself more than God and does not try to make sense of her brother's untimely death beyond her own strong sense of being-to-blame. Elena who is still in the early part of the process, recognises the importance of her faith and realises that although this has been shaken by the death, she needs to work on re-establishing her relationship with God.

Anxiety about the lack of control in their world and the awareness that they themselves could die, or that they could lose others close to them, coexists with a renewed appreciation of significant relationships and a need to nurture these. For some participants the death also precipitates changes in

their relationships to others and brings into sharper focus other important aspects of life including the significance of unconditional friendship and a compassion for the suffering of others.

- *Awareness of human finiteness brings into sharper focus spiritual aspects of life:*

Dia (73) : "...at that stage, twenty-one ... is also a time that you have not sorted yourself out properly in that respect (i.e. religious beliefs). You are emotional, perhaps very...you know this school religion can actually go terribly overboard...it's...almost a mass ...hysteria. And I don't want to shoot it down. Not at all. For many children it is of great value but one must see how long it lasts...It was very easy at a Christian Student Society camp to say, Yes... wonderful. The Lord is everything!' But when you find yourself in such a situation then it is a double-take...of *really* being in such a situation to...as I say with [my] friend's sister's and my sister's death, because their deaths were only six months apart, it was almost one thing...in that respect of, 'Why?' you know...and to deal with it. You are half involved in working through it when the second one occurs and you have to deal with that as well."

Elena (20/27) : "... religion-wise it's [i.e. the loss] changed me. I used to be a lot more religious...I won't say I'm angry with God. I won't say I'm upset with him but I've just *distanced* myself from Him...although lately it is better, you know, I am getting closer...but before I didn't...not that I wouldn't go to church...but I wouldn't *feel* it as I felt it before...I really don't know why..."; "...which is not nice but I think it's just something I have to like work through...I think the worst part is I can't really pinpoint it because it's not anger...I'm not angry with God for taking him away...I don't hate Him for it...I'm just, I guess... disappointed...Ja...I guess a bit disappointed...but I must work my way through that. I'm already much bet(ter)...well better...just a bit more time...it will come. Ja."

Cathy (38) : "...I've often thought about it. It never came up in my mind that: 'Why did God do this?'... perhaps I was blaming myself more than God ..."

- *Fear of death frequently coexists with a renewed appreciation of significant relationships:*

Dia (36) : " But I retained a *tre-men-dous* anxiety about travelling by car to the sea. This year (i.e. 30 years after the death) for the first time I realised...you know, it's all right. I...you know afterwards it got so bad that I thought: 'OK now we're at K., we've made it!'; 'Now we're at B., we've made it'; you know. That's how I travelled to the sea. It was...it was very bad. And I...these days I laugh at myself because I still think that you are going to...[have] a problem...an accident, when you're on the main road. I immediately put my seat belt on whereas here [back home] I would forget. So I...it clicked..."

E (47/48) : "...Ja, death's a very strange thing to deal with...I fear death...before it has never touched home. It's not really an issue, because...look, people die, but yes, I guess they're old and things like that..."; "...but from experiencing my brother's death I fear...I fear losing my parents...or anybody close to me, you know...I don't fear it every day...I won't say it really affects me...I just...I'd appreciate maybe people...like my parents, more... because I know they won't be here anymore...you know, like forever type of thing...always be here type of thing. But through the death I've basically realised it doesn't happen...They're not always going to be there, so I appreciate them more in ways, you know..."

- *The loss precipitates an awareness of the value of support and a compassion for others:*

Cathy (37/45) : "It's a...bereavement is a strange thing...it's...you can't picture the moment...and I often wonder, in small children, what happens there?...there isn't that [understanding]..."; "As I say, I think on looking back, bereavement counselling would have helped a lot, you know. But I've often thought, 'I wonder how parents would take to a child going for counselling'. You know, it's also still very much a new area, this counselling thing. They *counsel* children that have emotional problems but they don't regard a loss as a counselling problem...I see this at school as well...to me [counselling]

has become such an important ... after having gone to Lifeline and realising what it *did* do and I think if people become more aware of counselling and...for children as well. Children need help because it (i.e. loss) is very traumatic, you know..."

Dia (55) : "And she (i.e. family friend) was the type of personality that...if there was a *crisis* then she was there..... So she would immediately drop everything and say...'I'm going...' And this happened *repeatedly*, you know. So that support was there and it was very valuable".

13. Submitting to the changes liberates the self and allows for a second transformation.

All the participants experienced their lives as being permanently changed by the loss. Resolution meant submitting to these changes, grieving for that which had been lost and being open to the emergence of a new sense of self. Although all the participants had reached some resolution by the time of the interviews, one is still in the relatively early stages of the process. But even for those participants whose loss occurred many years ago the journey continues.

Participants had defined themselves not only in relation to parents and their perceptions of them ("I know my children well!") but also in relation to their siblings (good-bad; vulnerable-strong; responsible-irresponsible; etc.). At some point there is the realisation that these polarised roles were simply that - just roles that they were playing and that, in fact, part of the self had been externalised onto the sibling. By integrating characteristics of their sibling, participants found themselves re-owning parts of the self that had been surrendered to the sibling. Thus Dia, the younger of two children who with the death of her sister became the eldest (and only) child, found herself acknowledging that she could be adventurous as well as responsible. Elena, the youngest of three children, who had perceived herself as weaker than her older brothers, surprises herself by her strength.

Although painful, accepting that they were separate from their siblings and from their parents was to meet with the challenge of loneliness and to move on; to begin living their own lives again and to walk their own path, rather than trying to live someone else's life (that of their deceased sibling). However, while all participants had returned to active participation in their own lives and had reconnected with their own goals by the time of the interviews, this was not without some conflict and ambivalence. For Cathy the return to active participation in her life was more of an escape from an intolerable home situation and she continues to struggle with the loss, while for Dia the task of separating from parents, though painful and extremely traumatic, was a culturally and developmentally ground-breaking achievement and gave rise to a renewed and positive sense of self. Elena is still tentatively moving towards accepting her separateness but is aware that to move on is to grow and accepts that she can follow her own path without feeling that she is somehow betraying her loved ones in doing so.

- *A new sense of self emerges following the loss of the sibling:*

Dia (49/81) : "She (i.e. sister) was the eldest with a sense of responsibility which, of course left me more *free*..."; [After the loss] "I don't want it to sound as if I was burdened with responsibility but you see everyone around you suffering and that does not make it easy..."

Elena (63) : " Ja, it's just that you don't think that you're that strong, you know. I've obviously become a lot stronger...Ja, it's...'Okay, so take it when it happens', you know..."

- *In the process of reclaiming the self, conflicting feelings and thoughts are present:*

Dia (29/32/33) : " ...this was a thing that was very difficult...to...not really to get permission but *emotionally* to give *myself* permission to move away from home. *That* was very bad...I remember it was *terrible* to have to go and tell them that I wanted to move...For me it was... worse than going into an examination...it was grim...really grim..."; "...They (i.e. parents) definitely did not understand why I wanted to leave home and it was *terribly, terribly* traumatic for me to say this ... to get myself so far as to say, 'Now I am going!'; "...They are the most dear, most supportive people you can get. But...I think they could not get over it...I think that their needs were obviously considerably greater than their insight into *my* situation...That made it...I must say...I had to try and shake it off forcibly..."

Elena (71/72) : " Ja (getting back into her own career). I think I was doing something just for *me*...I'm not really a selfish person, you know. I'll do a lot for others if I know them...I guess I did this for *me*...I was just accepting something for *me* and not living...it was something that...if I didn't do...I think I'd regret one day...if I never did that for me, I would turn around one day and say [that] I should have and I didn't want to do that, for me. So I might as well give it a try"; "...it's Marketing research...Ja [it's] interesting...It's nice. Totally different to...the business (i.e. deceased brother's business)...I enjoy the environment...And you feel like you're always furthering yourself ...in my career, because obviously I'm learning and it's a whole new learning experience..."

Cathy (40/75) : "...and I often wonder...perhaps it is because I am inclined to run...from emotional...in anything...on TV...I switch [off]...and as a child I used to cry in movies that other people never cried. And I think when you're like that you try and escape and I think that feeling was always with me. [But] I can remember after 3 years I went to teach at X and I never...thought [that] perhaps I would escape it. I never had that feeling, you know, I just knew I was going. I took everything that was at home with me. The thought of getting away from it never entered my mind. I just knew that for *my* health and for my *emotional* survival I had to get away from home...at this stage I was 25/26...I went to X...yes it all went with me. It was like I packed it in the suitcase...the emotions, the..."; "...only these last few years that I felt...I am free of...to a certain extent confined...whole thing put on me. As though I'm starting to be my own person, not trying to be someone else's person..."

While a degree of forward mobility is achieved, it is only much later that some of the participants are able to break through the silence and self-alienation, give themselves over to their sorrow and openly grieve for their sibling. Being able to share their tormenting emotions and the trauma of their loss experience, even share their secret guilt, unfreezes the mourning and they feel that they can cope a bit better. Acknowledging their vulnerability and emotions, the truth of what lay inside themselves (the "guilt", the intense pain and hurt), letting go of the façade and submitting to the changes that the loss had brought about in their world, was liberating and allowed the grief process to run its course. This sharing was only possible in a relationship with an "other" who was trusted, whether husband/wife or counsellor/therapist, someone who could be present to the participant in a certain way; would not become upset or judge the grieving survivor.

Realising that they could not control life, learning to live without the answers to the mysteries of life and death, and forgiving self and others for being less than perfect opens up the future again.

However, while the participants are aware of the transformative impetus that the experience has given to their self development and their attitude towards life, they remain deeply aware of the cost of this transformation.

- *Letting go of the anger, hurt and guilt facilitates movement in the grief process:*

Cathy (29/30) : "...I think to a certain extent there is still a lot of guilt wrapped up in him having been in the car..."; "but I think you've got to let go as well, you know, can't live...As I had to eventually let go of...you know...I knew my brother was my mother's favourite child, you know. She was very protective of him. He was very much like her family...".

Dia (70) : "And that was another thing...religion...Fortunately at one point I got so far as to realise that I was allowed to be angry... For a long time I felt, yes, I'm annoyed and it's a very stupid thing to let happen. It was unnecessary. Look at how many lives have been messed up and people who...but for me it was a very, very big relief to realise that I may be angry as long as I could say this *directly* that, 'I am angry, help me sort it out'. I think it was okay for me...now I can cope..."

- *Actively mourning the loss was only possible in the presence of a trusted other:*

Cathy (66) : "...I couldn't tell anyone until I went to Lifeline...It brought it out and for the first time I could say that I felt so guilty and that."

Dia (35/82) : "...But after my marriage (3 years after the loss), for the first six months, I was able to really cry about it for the first time and I could say to my husband, 'It was *terrible* for me'...He's not one for speaking much but I could really verbalise...one, two or three episodes where for five minutes I would say that and that was terrible...that was enough for me... Afterwards it was alright..."; "I had the emotional trust...and he is the type of guy who wouldn't be upset with it, you know...I knew that I could say as much as I wanted to. He would not insist that I say more."

- *"Letting-be" allowed for a second transformation, one based on forgiveness of self and others:*

Cathy (31/32) : "She (i.e. mother) used me in many ways, I think...She was a very hard woman... I didn't realise at that stage that she had had so many...[losses] and she was very, very hard on me..."; "But I don't think you can...you must worry [about] 'why?'. No ... lately I just thought, well that was the way it was and you just got to accept and just get on with it..."

Dia (72) : "...So I accept that there is Someone who can plan and I am...I'm absolutely amazed by...planning. I am fanatical about planning (laughs). So if Someone can make provision for things so that this whole thing resulted in a whole subtle chain of how things are connected ...if someone can conceptualise this, then I must trust Him with the planning of my life. This is something that clicked with me. So the accusation (towards God) that I had in that respect has become for me: 'Good. I know better. I don't have to explain to you why I did this but I know better', and I must accept it like that."

Elena.(58/59) : "...and especially seeing your parents like that...you don't want to accept it like that...it *hurts* to see them like that...a lot"; "[But] I don't blame them for it, you know. I don't blame anyone for anything...its like, no one *did* it. It's just, that's the way it's become, you know..."

6.5 Structural Synthesis

The aim of this section is to present a synthesis and structural summation of the phenomenological psychological description of the experience of the loss of a sibling in young adulthood.

The lived experience of losing a brother or sister through death is a transformative experience and the sorrow that accompanies the loss is multi-layered and multidimensional. It is an intensely painful and traumatic experience and the impact of the loss is long-lasting. Only as the process evolves over time can all the shades and nuances be appreciated. It is fundamentally a loss of an intimate and significant other (a loved one) and, as such, the bereaved sibling experiences all the emotions associated with normal grief.

Losing a brother or sister is simultaneously experienced as a family loss. The total fabric of the family is ruptured. The death creates a fragmentation of the familial holding environment. The parents are "lost" in the way the family members had known them. The parents with their family intact are different parents to the ones now in profound grief. In this respect, the surviving sibling experiences a double loss.

The world of the bereaved sibling changes considerably. Occurring within the context of the family, the loss is experienced as a gap or emptiness, not only in the inner world, but also in the outer world - in the family structure where roles and tasks, responsibilities and expectations shift. Because the bereaved sibling experiences herself in a fundamental way in terms of her relationship to parents and siblings, the experience of the loss is also one that shakes her perception of self and of her being. Her whole relationship to the world and her world-view changes. The fragmentation of a shared world challenges the bereaved sibling's total emotional equilibrium and her sense of wholeness, rootedness, and belongingness.

Losing someone from her own family line and from her own generation throws everything that has been taken for granted into question and confronts the bereaved sibling with unpredictable mortal existence and with the terror of existential loneliness in later life. As such, it is also an experience that demands radical mourning, reorganisation and reintegration and continues to be felt long after the actual death. As the bereaved sibling moves through different transitional phases in her life, she feels the pain of the loss anew and becomes aware of future loss. Because of the infinite nature of the sibling bond and the assumption of enduring contact, she grieves not only for what has been lost in the present but also for what the future might have held - mutual support, sharing, and greater closeness. Thus, it is also an experience of "growing up" with the loss, and the grief is long-lasting.

Living together, growing up together, fighting with each other but just as often defending, comforting and helping each other; sharing parents and a common history, the experience of the loss of a sibling triggers myriad memories, both positive and negative. The flood is intensely bewildering. Ambiguous, paradoxical and conflicted emotions emerge that are often ambivalent. The internally disruptive experience cannot be faced immediately or all at once. Often it goes unshared. Initially attempts to withdraw, to resist the changes and the reality of the death and loss and to hide the painful emotions predominate. In some instances, the psychic camouflage and sub-total evasion persist for a long time. Externally the surviving sibling presents a façade and continues with life as "normal". To the outside observer, and even to the immediate family, she seems to be "coping well"; she is "strong", her grief seems to be "resolved", yet internally, she remains torn and the lingering sadness and missing persist.

The relational aspect of sibling loss is glaringly obvious. The "script" that was lived out with her brother or sister, no matter how flawed, has been ripped up. Adding to her heaviness and pain is her parents' intense grief, their seeming inability to comfort each other and their visible deterioration. Thus, the surviving sibling puts in "brackets" her loss, her pain - her very self - in order to care for, and protect her devastated parents. She experiences her parents' profound sorrow as a poignant imperative, an ethical and moral "demand"; a response-ability. Notwithstanding her grief for her sibling, she must be there for them. She cannot turn away from this appeal. Even though the assumption of enduring contact has been ruptured, the fabric that binds the family, the faith and trust that those that have been there since birth will be there for each other, persists and endures. Witnessing her parents' profound and unremitting grief, a fear gradually surfaces; the fear of losing her primary attachments as well. In some cases, this signifies the last vestige of her lost brother or sister, her link to the past, present and future.

With the threat of further fragmentation and in attempting to sustain significant attachments, the natural separation-individuation process is temporarily suspended. Lingering in the primary relationships provides a degree of continuity, stability and control over her world but is also restrictive and prevents mobility in her mourning. Over a period of time the bereaved sibling realises that there is nothing that she can do which will ever fill the space created by the death of the beloved child. Within the family context, she becomes attuned to the dialectic of increased attention and (benign) neglect as parents struggle to cope with their deep hurt and to confront their submerged fear of losing a child; a fear which has now become a reality. Now the bereaved sibling feels alienated and abandoned in a different way. She realises that her feelings go unacknowledged and unnoticed. The family life cycle becomes frozen and she feels as if there is almost no movement in her own mourning. The ever-present sense of existential guilt, of potential that has not been realised, erodes her emotional and physical health and she struggles to maintain an independent sense of her own worth from an "abandoned" position. Her grief is postponed.

The struggle alone to make sense of her loss puts a distance between her and the world of others and paradoxically removes her from her lived world. Instead of the profound fullness, her emotional world begins to feel empty. It is the experience of being an "involved-outsider", of being part of the grief situation yet also apart from it. Because everyone around her is so torn and vulnerable, the experience is a profoundly lonely, confusing and externally silent experience. Initially there is the shock, the inability to deal with her overwhelming emotions, a fear of breaking down and a sense of distance from others that silences her. Later, there is the desire to protect, and to be strong for her parents and to shield them from further pain. In addition, others fail to acknowledge that she too has suffered a significant loss and this maintains the silence. Constantly aware of the pain of others (parents, husband, lover, child, friends of the deceased), she hears and responds to the call to assuage their grief and suffering. The situation, as she experiences it, demands that she not abandon them; and she cannot afford to disintegrate. So she puts in abeyance her tattered self. She stays shrouded in silence. She remains, however, profoundly lonely and confused.

The bereaved sibling does not reveal her grief to her network of relations. It is as if her grief does not exist. Her own protective silence is aided and abetted by her parents' visible pain and by the uneasiness of others in being-with-the-bereaved. She begins to deny the full meaning of the pain of her loss. She questions whether she is even entitled to mourn - she, who is *only* the sister.

It is a blessing when finally someone, some event or some idea breaks through the silence, isolation and alienation and stirs the pool of emotions surrounding her loss. It is a grace when her grief begins to move outward. Whenever it does, learning about self gradually evolves. Deep learning about others and about the significance of spiritual aspects in her life develops. As she begins to digest her loss, her perception of the world expands to include death and loss of a young person as a harsh reality. She also comes to appreciate significant others in her life and feels a new compassion for those that are suffering. The power and flawed fragility of her family is brought home to her. It brings an appreciation of others outside the realm of family sorrow. By breaking through her silence, isolation, alienation and loneliness, she confronts her fear of death. Yielding to the pain and submitting to the changes are existentially painful. However, the confrontation dulls death's sting and forwards her mourning process.

Now she can "let be". Can accept that she has a life of her own and can live it without feeling guilt or shame that she is somehow betraying the deceased sibling or her parents. Only then can she let go of the cesspool of hurt, anger, fear and guilt. Letting go is liberating. It allows for another form of transformation, one that touches on liberation on various levels and dimensions of relations, reintegration. It opens new doors, windows upon the world. It carves out new roads into the future.

However, the sadness lingers. The future will come without the physical presence of the deceased sibling. There is no consolation but some comfort is derived from the perpetual presence of the deceased sibling as constantly present in absence; spiritually present as the survivor moves through the various transitional phases that will dot her life. There is an awareness of the rich legacy left by the deceased brother or sister and memories are held onto and fill the gap left by the deceased sibling.

6.6 Essential Structure

The lived experience of the loss of a sibling to death is a transformative experience and the sorrow that accompanies the loss is multifaceted and evolves over time. It is fundamentally a loss of an intimate and significant other (a loved one) and the surviving sibling experiences all the emotions associated with normal grief. As the loss threatens with fragmentation and isolation, fear and insecurity intensifies and the desire for wholeness, rootedness and continuity becomes paramount. Initially attention is focused on maintaining primary attachments that are also felt to be "lost", while "bracketing" the self and own grief. In retaining attachments to the familiar, a façade contains and conceals the grief as the need to remain functional dominates and the reality of the pain is evaded. From the trapped position of an "involved-outsider", the sibling's journey becomes a silent and lonely one and memories are held on to that fill the gap in the present and the emptiness that threatens in the future. Yielding to the grief and submitting to the changes is existentially painful but confrontation with the truth that lies within forwards the mourning process. Only then can the bereaved sibling let go of the hurt, anger, fear and guilt that allows for a different form of transformation; one based on forgiveness that liberates the self on various levels and opens up the future once again.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION

Until recently, the empirical and therapeutic literature on grief, and even the self-help genre have paid scant attention to adult sibling loss. Such silent, benign neglect speaks volumes. Overlooking it seems in itself to be a metaphor of the phenomenon.

The aim of the present study was to discover what it is like to experience the loss of a sibling through death by gathering direct descriptions of the lived experience from surviving siblings themselves. Exploring this experience was undertaken both to gain a more integrated and comprehensive understanding of what it means to lose a brother or sister and to fill a gap in the psychological literature. Giving a "voice" to surviving siblings, who have been described in the literature as "silent", "invisible", or "forgotten" mourners, constitutes an essential aspect of the aim of this study. By approaching the phenomenon from an experiential-qualitative, rather than from a quantitative perspective, this study makes explicit the implicit structure regarding the way in which an individual lives and experiences the loss of a brother or sister and the unique personal meanings that such a loss has for the survivor.

Since all the participants were in their early twenties at the time of the death of their sibling - and all were still living at home - results were based on descriptions of the loss at a time when the participants had acquired a degree of independence from parents and were moving in different directions to that of their siblings, but, their lives were still closely intertwined with their families.

The present study reveals that the loss of a sibling is an experience that turns the surviving sibling's whole world upside down, confronts her with changes on many levels (i.e. self, parents, others) and shakes the sense of self, wholeness, rootedness and belongingness. With the loss, the self is confronted by a void: an emptiness that threatens to fragment self and significant others. A powerful desire endures to retain primary attachments and to recover a sense of continuity and stability. An emotional struggle, characterised by ambiguous, paradoxical and confused emotions, evolves and persists. Although the grief that accompanies sibling loss has many elements common to grief over the loss of any loved person, the context of sibling loss is unique and grief over the loss of a brother or sister should not be confused with other losses or with separation. It is a radically relational but extremely silent phenomenon that leaves the survivors feeling confused, bewildered and very alone. Everybody around them is so torn and vulnerable that bereaved siblings "bracket" their own grief. The resulting conspiracy of silence closets - contains and conceals - their sorrow. They begin to feel like "involved outsiders", part-of but also apart-from the whole grief situation. Surviving siblings attempt

to synthesise a continuous sense of self in the absence of their sibling by holding on to, and cherishing, memories. The dimension of the impact of the death of a brother or sister is a salient feature of this unique loss experience. The impact of sibling loss is long-lasting and demands radical mourning and reorganisation; the challenge to meet with change and separateness and to move on. Submitting to the changes and acknowledging their grief forwards the mourning process and allows for a different form of transformation: one based on forgiveness that liberates the self on different levels and allows for a reclaiming of the self and for reintegration.

In this chapter, the brackets of all preconceptions (personal, theoretical, moral, and religious) regarding the loss of a sibling are lifted and the findings of the study are discussed. Where the voices of bereavement theorists, of other researchers or personal writings, amplify the voices of the participants, these will be acknowledged. However, the study remains grounded in the actual experience of the participants. The study is descriptive, reflective and based upon phenomenological thought. It privileges the life-world of bereaved siblings. The focus of my writing is concerned with actuality; with the real lived experience of sibling loss. Thus, writers like Freud, Kierkegaard and C. S. Lewis, while each come from very different orientations, converge in ideas and descriptions and their contributions are cited. Where relevant, themes emerging from the preliminary study (in Appendix D) are also cited. The present chapter includes a description of the pattern of sibling grief, implications for support and psychotherapy, and professional and cultural perceptions and conceptions of the sibling bond and sibling loss. The chapter ends with a re-visiting of the method used, and suggestions for further research.

For ease of reading, and because all the participants (and volunteers in the preliminary study) are female, “she”, “her” and “herself” will be used throughout this section to refer to the surviving sibling. When writing about the sibling who has died, “he” or “she” and “his” or “hers” will be used. The participants’ assigned pseudonyms are retained throughout this chapter. Volunteers in the preliminary study have also been allocated pseudonyms.

7. Introduction

This study found that the most salient aspect of sibling-loss is the essentially relational aspect of the loss experience. The loss of a brother or sister - someone from our own generation and family line, a childhood playmate/rival, someone who fought, cried and laughed with us, who affirmed us in many ways, and who witnessed our transitions through childhood to young adulthood - is an intensely painful experience. This loss does not occur in a vacuum but has echoes that reverberate and impact on the lives of many others: parents, extended family, spouse and/or children of the deceased, friends, neighbours, and even the community. When a child or young person dies, the loss touches us all and evokes grief informed by the relationship that each had with the deceased. For the bereaved sibling

this can be quite bewildering and confusing. Paradoxically, it is in relation to others who are also mourning that the surviving sibling experiences her comfort and also her pain. She wants to mourn the loss of her brother or sister, but where does she find the space to do so amongst all the other mourners, particularly the parents who have suffered such a severe blow? How does she deal with the loss of such a vibrant and fluctuating relationship with all its ambiguities? Again, it is in the remembered relationship with the deceased brother or sister that the bereaved sibling finds her solace and her pain.

Heidegger (1927/1962) demonstrated trenchantly that death is life's most singularising experience. According to Heidegger (1927/1962: 294-296), our death is our "*ownmost non-relational possibility*" that cannot be bypassed ("outstripped"). It is our most personal, unique and unavoidable experience. It is *definite* "that" we will die; "when" and "how" remain "*ownmost*". Death is non-relational. It dissolves all bonds. We die alone. No one can substitute for us when it comes to dying. Death wrenches us away from the crowd, from the "they self", from "das Mann".

In the way it has given death its due, Heidegger's (1927/1962) analysis of Dasein as being-unto-death is unsurpassed. Borrowing generously from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Heidegger makes us mortal again: *bodily and finite*. To him, we are on this earth as our home and not a way-station. He locates us in time; he shows that we co-exist with and for one another. Kierkegaard (1845/1988: 425) provokes us to live as if we were "already dead". Nietzsche admonishes us to learn how to die at the "right" time.

From the point of view of the one who dies, it is true that death is non-relational. It dissolves all bonds. I die alone. The *greater truth*, however, seen from the perspective of the survivors, is that death is very much a relational phenomenon, it certainly does *not* dissolve all bonds; my death is mine alone but I leave a legacy of pain and suffering to many others - my family, siblings, perhaps a spouse and child. I bequeath existential chaos. For the survivors, a death in the family, as this research demonstrates, is potentially the most relational phenomenon of life. Who-I-am is being part of my *people*, is being anchored in my roots. I am never "unto myself alone". As noted by John Donne (Devotions, XII):

"Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee."

The death of a sibling underlines this connectedness. I always am, have been and will be a-part-of my family no matter how much I have "moved" apart-from it, no matter how fiercely independent I am or have become. Even if over the years I have uprooted, disengaged from my family, in the face of the death of my mother or father, of my brother or sister, roots surface in this soil at this moment in time:

"I am part of the sun as my eye is part of me. That I am part of the earth my feet know perfectly, and my blood is part of the sea. My soul knows that I am part of the human race ... as my spirit is part of my nation. In my own self I am part of my family".
(D.H.Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, in Rosen, 1986: 39)

Who would contradict the truism that grief is as personal as one's fingerprints? It is my grief. Only I can feel it. I can tell you about it, but, no matter how sympathetic or empathic you are, you will never feel it as I do. Who would doubt the well-researched and well-articulated general process of mourning: that we all grieve in a more or less similar way? The story of sibling loss does in fact, to some extent, follow this general process. It is a story of individual pain. And much of the experience can be captured by the accumulated wisdom of theoreticians and clinicians and writers who have struggled to understand this inescapable dimension of life.

However, the story of sibling loss is *qualitatively* different. It is also a family loss. Even as tracing the phenomenon shows us one example of the grief process as generally experienced, it forcefully jars us out of our complacency of drawing a blueprint, of confusing the grief experienced by a surviving sibling with the grief experienced in other losses. Grief over the loss of a sibling reveals a whole different texture. In this respect, it enables us to see the general grief process in a fuller light. In particular, it attunes us to the fact that death is not only singularising as Heidegger (1927/1962) asserts, but a family matter as well, and the ways in which various members in the family cope with the loss of its member, co-creates the grieving of all as Dia powerfully elucidates:

"Okay, how you cope with it [the loss] is certainly your affair. But ... but the demands that are made on you, apart from the fact that your brother or sister is dead ... the immediate demands ... that is determined by the personalities of the other people in the family. And this can be even more taxing than the fact that you have suffered a loss. That was something that I realised afterwards. *That* was for me the thing that stood out that was a *double* thing for me."

In the course of this study it became increasingly evident that grief over the loss of a sibling ranges beyond the existing view of individual psychology and the mere acknowledgement of man's social nature. It is evident that one cannot truly understand the pain of the surviving sibling if one does not attend to the rupture in the total fabric of the family and the interplay between individual and relational factors: the fundamental interconnectedness among the members of a family that is so powerful that it inevitably accompanies us throughout life.

The use of a musical chord as a metaphor for the family can help us better to understand what is shaken and/or ruptured by the loss of a sibling. This metaphor inspires the imagination to "see" and to "hear" a particular sound created by the combination of notes. Each note is essential in giving this chord its characteristic and harmonious sound. The notes are related to one another insofar as they are

co-present to each other, but they are also connected to each other by a certain contiguity in time. Should one of the notes be removed, this chord is not only significantly diminished or impoverished, but it is no longer the same chord - it changes completely. Moreover, whenever this chord appears in the piece of music, even if practised religiously with loving care and the chord becomes harmonious once again, it is apparent that it is no longer the same chord. In Gestalt language, if you transpose an entire piece, it is the same music, albeit in a different key; but, if you change or remove one note, the whole changes.

Similarly, with the loss of a sibling, the family is diminished by the death of one of its members. It is not the same family that it was before the loss and part of the survivor's grief is to mourn this loss as well as the loss of the sibling. Kierkegaard (1843/1959a: 154) in his discussion of the Greek tragedy, "Antigone", points out that: "[it is] not an individual who goes down, it is a small world ... ", and I would like to add, that it is the surviving sibling who seems to experience the desire and the implicit obligation to piece this world together again and to recreate the fullness and wholeness that has been lost.

7.1 Findings and Theory

The presentation of the discussion in a coherent manner presents a dilemma, as the loss of a sibling and the loss of a child are intertwined. It is not as if the experience of the sibling or the experience of the parents comes first. It is a matter of fluidity, of flexibility, of looking at the whole from one angle, and then again from another angle. Neither has priority; you cannot understand the one without the other. I have, therefore, chosen to focus on the themes in the experience of the participants and, where relevant, to relate these to the parents' grief. In an attempt to present the dynamic structure of the whole, a shift away from a linear perspective of this experience was necessary: a shift away from split variables, away from detachment to a view that privileges the relationship between siblings and paradoxically also privileges the family. Some repetition is therefore inevitable.

7.1.1 The Fragmentation of the Familial Holding Environment

An important dimension of the special pain, confusion, fear and ambivalence experienced at the loss of a sibling is the fragmentation of the familial holding environment. The death ruptures the total fabric of the family and with it the sense of wholeness, rootedness and belongingness. There is a huge gap: a "hole" in the whole.

Before the loss, the participants felt at-home within the familiar network of parental and sibling relationships. Within the family they had a place and a role, a sense of self as part of the family and the family as part of them. They felt anchored in their roots and shared history, and lived the conviction of belonging, of being at-home. Heidegger (1977: 3-25) elaborates the notion of lived-

space to showcase the human realities of "residing within", "inhabiting", "being familiar with", and also "cherishing", "preserving", "looking after" and "caring for". In brief, he calls it "dwelling". It provides the horizon from which humans move out into the wider world and meet the future, the existential platform from which they can stride forth.

In the face of the loss, the participants are ripped from the above familiar order. Their perception of self and world is dramatically changed. They have not only suffered a loss of a significant other, a part of self, but the death exposes the vulnerability of their parents and evokes considerable anxiety over the possible loss of these primary bonds as well: bonds which provided the centre or anchorage from which the first encounters between self and world occurred. T. S. Eliot (1955: 22) points out that "*[h]ome is where one starts from*". In developmental psychological terms, the parent provides the "holding" (the feeling of rootedness) that allows us to move out into the world and form other attachments. Winnicott (1990) points out that when the environment is "good or good-enough", the infant is not even aware of the environment as environment - it is taken for granted. The environment induces reactions when it fails in some respects. With the loss of a sibling, the familial environment is fragmented and induces anxiety. Even in young adulthood, if we are not held we "fall"; if we are not attached, we are "lost".

It has been well documented (Gelcer, 1986; Gilbert, 1996) that when a member of a family dies, the structure of the family changes; roles and tasks, responsibilities and expectations shift, and the family must reorganise itself. This study shows that this is as true of childhood sibling loss as when the loss of a sibling occurs in young adulthood. Pape (2002: 6) avers:

"For many families who lose an adult child, that child's role seems to get placed on the front step with a 'free' sign attached to it, ready for one of the other siblings to adopt and take into themselves".

The findings of the present study concur with Pape's (2002) observations. Although their parents do not openly make any demands on them, living at home and witnessing their parents' profound pain, the participants experience their parents' grief as an appeal from which they cannot turn away. All respond to the "free" sign, the vacant space, albeit in different ways. This is particularly stressful when the surviving sibling becomes an only child (Cathy and Dia) or the only child still living at home (Elena). The "free" sign signifies a demand, a tug at the living heart.

- **The Double Loss**

The present study trenchantly demonstrates that losing a sibling is not simply a matter of losing a role that must and can be filled within the family. The change following the loss is more pervasive than a process of modifying external relationships or taking up new roles. The gap in the family signifies an

existential emptiness that remains forever. The tear in the fabric of the family is bigger than the absence of one person; it changes the *meaning* of the entire family.

In the way the participants had known them, parents and "home" are also "lost". That is the basis of the experience of deep and pervasive insecurity and the fear that their parent(s) might imminently collapse. At risk is the participants' connectedness to life. The parents with their family intact, or at least, the parents whose family, only moments ago, had the now-dead child in it, *alive*, were different parents to those who are now in profound grief. Elena expresses this dramatic transformation of parents, of world and self, poignantly:

"And from then my mother has not been the same. My father is not the same. Our lives are not the same. We are just not the same people ... There is a hole in our hearts, in our lives ... It feels like I've *lost* my ... not *lost* my family but, it's ja, definitely changed us in many ways..."

Already it is clear. It is a *double* loss - a loss accompanied by its own grief and fears of further fragmentation. The change in their parents is experienced as another loss: another "death". In brief, a phenomenological death multiplies the physical loss.

But how are the parents different? And who are the parents that the participants encounter after the loss? In this time of grief, the parents, and particularly the mother, become totally preoccupied with the lost child. The parents' *presence* in the sense of really being *available*, being there *with* and *for* the remaining sibling/s, is experienced as an *absence*. The participants experience that their parents lack the energy to attend to anything or anybody else while coping with their anguish over the loss of their child. Living at home, surviving siblings feel the heaviness of their parents' pain. The participants do not question that the severance of the parent-child bond is one of the most extreme situations that one can ever encounter; nevertheless, they experience the isolating effect of grief and the absence of a familiar, "inviting" presence. They become aware that although their parents have both lost a child, their way of being-in-their-grief is different. These differences distance them from each other and subtly also from the participants. In the aftermath of the death, the surviving sibling reaches for someone that is no longer there. The parents with whom the bereaved sibling reconnects after the loss are distraught and emotionally fragile. In many ways the parents are like "strangers". This is evidenced by all the participants. In Cathy's situation, where the family had suffered previous losses, the "new" mother she encounters is even more alienating, angry and rejecting than before the loss. Dia's father, whom she dearly loved, unwittingly threatens her stability as he attempts to draw her out to speak about her feelings. Elena cannot recognise her mother as she sinks deeper into her grief. Their parents' "otherness" deepens the participants' sorrow and they do not know how to be in this "new"

relationship. The unique burden of the surviving sibling is to want at all costs to recover the family that they had.

- **The Dialectic of "Holding" and "Holding-On"**

Although the family structure has been ruptured and the parents are "lost" in the way the participants had known them, has the "holding" also gone? Optimal "bonding" as used to describe family unions, inspires us to see the loving "embrace" between husband and wife, between parent and child, and between brothers and sisters. However, besides the image of embracing, "bonding" can also carry the connotation of "binding", "restraining", "lack of freedom", "disallowing". After the death, the participants in fact seem to experience the "holding" as more intense; but it is more one of "bondage", one that restricts mobility and the freedom to "be" (Cathy), a "holding on" or "clinging" (Dia), rather than a "holding".

The "holding" experienced after the loss is paradoxically both *distant* and *close*. Parents experience the void of the loss and need to fill the emptiness, but the deceased child remains powerfully in their minds. This is evident in the present study. Although most of the participants experience their parents' attention as being focused on them, they simultaneously feel that they themselves are not noticed or acknowledged. They feel excluded from the intense dynamic between the parents and the deceased brother or sister, who is often remembered in idealised terms. Rubin's research (1996) into the impact of the deaths of adult sons in the Arab/Israeli conflict found examples of parents who, years after their bereavement, still appeared to have a closer relationship with the deceased than with their surviving sons. Phenomenologically speaking, the meaning of the dead child assumes greater significance than the physical presence of the live one. The "live one" begins to feel like a cipher.

Freud used the German word "besetzen" ("attachment", "tie", "bond", "investment", and "occupation", "bondage"), to capture his insight into the power of the 'Trieb' or 'drive' that binds human beings to one another. The mother is attached to her infant by libidinal bonds and the child becomes attached to the father, to siblings and to others, through this primary bond to the mother. The mother-child bond is difficult to loosen at any time. It is especially difficult to loosen at the time of death. Indeed, a profoundly painful dimension of mourning is that the survivor "hyper-invests" in the significant other that has been lost. Death does not break the bond, it strengthens it. By focusing on this attachment the parents cling to their lost child. Thus, grief work leaves little space for anything or anyone else or for other attachments. The parents become totally absorbed with the deceased, whose significance is strengthened by "a thousand links" (Freud, 1917/1959). These links, Freud tells us, can only be unravelled "bit by bit."

While the intense mourning of parents is appropriate and may indeed last "forever" (Brice, 1991), what about the surviving sibling whose unique relationship with the brother or sister is also strengthened by a thousand links? How does he or she begin to grieve? What are the obstacles, the barriers?

Even as young adults, their parents' intense mourning confuses and frightens the participants. In the face of it, they cannot risk also becoming submerged in their grief. They watch their parents disintegrate, or perhaps witness the parents' marriage starting to crumble. These emotional perceptions limit their capacity to focus upon self. On the other hand, to ignore or fail to acknowledge their parents' plight, courts a different danger. Paradoxically, to ignore parental disintegration is to risk personal fragmentation. The survivors need grounding, rootedness. From a Winnicottian perspective, the child holds and is held by the mother. With the loss of a child/sibling, we may perhaps speak of this "holding" as one where the mother (parent) holds-on and is held by the (surviving) "child".

Grief, to flow and run its course, requires "holding", *grounding*, rootedness. The study reveals that all the participants initially experience the need to maintain the integrity of the parents. They put the self and their own grief aside. First and foremost, they protect and care for their parents. From within this sheltering orientation, they attempt to recover the sense of wholeness and stability that they experienced prior to the death. Thus a "*bracketing*" (rather than a *denial*) of their own mourning over the loss of their brother or sister is a salient aspect of the grief process of the surviving sibling. There is a need to be attached, to be anchored, "held". If we are to become absorbed in our loss, we must first make sure that we are grounded, rooted. It is significant in this regard that all the participants were still living at home at the time of the loss and had not yet formed intimate attachments to significant others who could provide the anchor or support which would enable them to enter the space and to grieve openly.

7.1.2 Space and Nothingness

The loss of a sibling creates a space not only in the family but also in the participants' lives and they become very divided and reflective. The participants are caught in the vacuum and confronted by the "nothingness". Where formerly there was relationship, or at least strife, now there is emptiness and a deep sadness. The space-between that the participants formerly welcomed and even fought for and which allowed for growth, for related-separateness, becomes a gaping void that cannot initially be faced.

With the loss and the emptiness comes a deeper awareness of the significance of their brother or sister in their lives. For some, a fear of existential loneliness in later life gradually surfaces. The future, as it was anticipated before the loss, is irrevocably changed. A particular future - support, sharing,

companionship, assistance with aged parents - is lost and anticipatory grief is experienced. As the participants move through various transitional phases in their lives, they experience the gap and the loneliness anew. This was evidenced by most of the participants. Dia becomes more acutely aware of the absence of her sister as she prepares for her own marriage. Later, when her father dies, she re-experiences the lack of sisterly support. Elena feels the emptiness and the deep longing for her brother on the occasion of her becoming a godmother and anticipates the loss of future relationships and possibilities (when she gets married and has children) with deep sorrow. In the preliminary study, Angie experiences the absence of her elder sister who would have provided support and guidance through "all the new milestones". The empty space persists, it would seem, forever.

This "growing-up-with-the loss" was experienced by all of the participants and in many respects is similar to the empty space experienced by a parent at the loss of a child. Rando (1991: 240) defines this component of a parent's grief as "a variation of anniversary phenomena" where the parent experiences pangs of grief at the time of events that will never happen - e.g. graduation, getting married, having children. Kubler-Ross (1982: 178) refers to this as "going through the ... dying" again. It is this "dying again" that the participants evade. As expressed succinctly by Cathy: "You think of the future and the pain that lies ahead and you just don't want to accept [the loss]".

With everything changing, the empty space cannot be dealt with immediately. In the study, the participants resist the changes and attempt to retain a sense of continuity through links to the familiar. This is evidenced by all the participants, and is most cogently described by Angie (in the preliminary study): "I did not want to feel her absence and so I learned to close off myself to what I was feeling. If it had been up to me, I would have just ignored that anything had happened at all. I merely wanted to continue with life as it always was." In avoiding the confrontation with the gap, the participants put on a façade as they attempt to cope with the more immediate reality (their parents' disintegration) and the demands of "normal" everyday life (academic task; maintaining the family businesses) while hiding and protecting the torn and tattered inner self.

All the participants concealed their deeper emotions from significant others in their lives. Although Heidegger (1927/1962) alerts us to the risk of alienation pursuant on a lingering sense of "inauthentic" living, for the bereaved sibling the façade appears to be a necessary initial step in coping with the inner emptiness and the existential chaos of all the other significant others who are also in such deep pain. The participants put themselves aside. First they need to reintegrate their external world. They need to maintain continuity and stability by sustaining their parents and, in some instances, filling the gap created by the deceased sibling; they must somehow bring their parents "back into life" before attending to their own grief. The present study reveals an awareness of this divided self. Reflective of

the experienced inauthenticity is Elena's description of her experience: "I mean I would smile at them [i.e. friends] although inside me you could see that I was hurting and like sad...". In retrospect, Elena is surprised by her initial strength as she copes with everyday tasks; yet she is acutely aware that internally she felt "very weak". Although the circumstances were different in Cathy's situation, her description of the experience conveys the same message: "I felt like an outsider... ja, sitting outside the whole [thing]...but being very torn as well and very upset." Dia becomes aware that her mastery and control in relation to the world was false but that she needed to maintain this façade in order to avoid "collapsing altogether". For all the participants, their inner feelings remain hidden for a long time as they struggle to cope with their parents' grief and to protect them from additional pain. However, internally most of the bereaved siblings remain active and think constantly of their deceased brother or sister. It is only when the inner truth is repeatedly ignored (by self and others) that entrapment ensues and freezes the mourning process. This was evident in Cathy's extreme situation, and for a long time she could not move beyond the initial shock, fear and disbelief.

7.1.3 Oneness and Separateness

Although the participants recognised their uniqueness and the differences between themselves and their siblings, the sense of separateness, both from parents and from their sibling, could not be confronted immediately.

Whereas before the loss there had been a relatively comfortable dialectic of oneness and separateness, of solitude and presence, of distance and relation, of attachment and freedom, after the loss there is a feeling of radical separateness and distance and a sense of not-being-at-home: an estrangement from their familiar world. The participants no longer feel "at-home" in this "new" world. The "dwelling" that made a space become a place, that offered safety and allowed freedom of movement over time, and within which she could most freely be a "me" and engage in a "we", is ruptured.

The experience of the loss brings about a disruption to the sense of oneness and wholeness, and threatens the surviving sibling's integrity and identity. Participants knew themselves in a particular way through the unfolding relationship with their sibling, and through the roles that they played within the family and in the sibling group (which frequently differed from those in the family). With the loss, this unfolding is abruptly and permanently ended. There is an emptiness not only in the outside world but also in the inner world of the surviving sibling - "Am I still a sister?", "Am I still the younger/older one?". Carse (1980: 4) observes: "Often we do not know how closely our self-understanding is developed in relation to another person until that person has been taken by death". This is especially true of the loss of a sibling, someone who shared the early landscape of the participant's life.

Participants experienced a sense of oneness and sameness with their siblings, while at the same time recognising that they were different and separate. It was clear from the interviews that the participants had many shared experiences with their siblings, but that they also had many non-shared experiences. The former reinforced the sense of oneness and the latter created a feeling of separateness. For some, the brother or sister represented the other part of self, the "shadow" (Jung, 1953/1966). Bank and Kahn (1982) refer to the splits that are more likely to occur within the sibling relationship ("me-not me", "good-bad", "responsible-daring") as brothers and sisters strive to differentiate themselves from each other and to establish an identity separate from their siblings. This "dialectic dance", as Bank and Kahn (1982) refer to the fluctuating rhythm in sibling relationships, of oneness and separateness, of closeness and distance, is abruptly broken by the loss. The task of the bereaved sibling becomes one of attempting to recover the part of the self that has been lost through the death of the brother or sister: an attempt to unify their dual nature.

Although as young adults the participants and their siblings did not play such a prominent role in each other's lives, and not all the participants felt close to their siblings at the time of the death, their siblings were there and pre-reflectively the participants lived the conviction that they would always be there for each other. Their relationship was continuously changing, but what remained constant was the assumption of enduring contact and relatedness. As noted by Dia, a friend or a husband can choose to stay in the relationship or not but a brother or a sister (as well as one's child) *must* be there. The sibling relationship, whether positive or negative, continues throughout the life span. The boundaries between siblings are different to the boundaries in other relationships. What one can demand or expect from a brother or sister is not the same as what one can demand from others. Having siblings implies being a sibling for life - there are no laws which make or break these bonds (Bank & Kahn, 1982), but the faith and trust that they will be there for each other in the future is stronger than any law.

In the present study, the sudden and extreme separation from their brother or sister breaks the rhythmic alternation between closeness and distance and evokes intense existential anxiety. The sibling realises that no matter how strong the connection with another, their lives are distinct and the break in the sense of oneness now assumes another texture - a sense of absolute separateness.

That the mourner either hopes to find the deceased, or in one way or another tries to fuse with him or her, is part of every mourning process (Freud, 1917; Klein, 1940; Bowlby, 1979, 1980; Parkes, 1972/1975). By integrating characteristics of the deceased, one can bring about a union with the one whom one has lost and retain a sense of relation, of oneness with the loved one. Elena, whose loss was fairly recent (brother died two-and-a-half years ago), experienced a strong sense of her brother-being-in-her and was delighted whenever she spontaneously uttered a phrase or word as *he* would

have used it, because it reminded her of him. Abandoning her own career and taking over her brother's business also became a way of maintaining the attachment to him. Implicitly, as long as she was filling in for him (doing his work), he was in some way still out "there".

According to the present research, it is not only those participants who had a very close relationship to their siblings who tend to this fusion. There seems to be a stage of longing for closeness to their deceased brother or sister that almost all the participants go through. The study reveals that all the participants were affected by the loss of their brother or sister (although not in the same way) and not only those who were emotionally very close to their sibling. The sibling relationship is a fluctuating, vital relationship and what may once have been a very conflicted or distant relationship can change and a brother or sister may become more central to the sibling at a later stage in life. This was evidenced by the responses of all the participants. Cathy, who had a distant and somewhat ambivalent relationship with her brother, started drawing closer to him as he matured and they were able to share more. As a child and adolescent, Elena fought a lot with her brother but later grew very close to him, and she was aware of his strong affection for her. Dia, who was the polar opposite of her sister and was aware that they were not really "pals" at the time of the death, recognised that the closeness would "have come later". For all the participants the loss was experienced as a deep wrench. The study concurs with Cicirelli's (1995) observations that the sibling relationship can only be understood using a life span perspective. The deeper meanings of the experience of the loss of a sibling can only be fully understood as these unfold over time.

Pertinent to the loss of a sibling, the danger of comparing losses (e.g. that the siblings did not get on well together, that the deceased was not central in the life of the survivor, and/or that he or she was young and therefore did not get to know the brother or sister that well), is that the grief of these frequently unacknowledged mourners may go unnoticed. This is evidenced by all the participants and also demonstrated in the preliminary study where Angie notes: "My brothers were young. Only later that I realised how badly the death had impacted on my nine-year old brother. He never really wants to talk about her, but I know it affects him badly." It may seem obvious that one would not mourn the loss of a sibling who was not very central in one's life as much as one would someone with whom one has shared a great deal; but this statement cannot be taken at face value, as is evidenced by Mary in the preliminary study. Although she did not have much contact with her eldest brother, she idolised him, and his death had a tremendous impact on her. In addition, her mother's grief was profound and Mary's whole world was turned upside down by the loss. Unfortunately, nobody seemed to realise how much Mary was hurting and that she too needed to mourn her brother.

Even the loss of a brother or sister that the sibling has not known has significance and impacts on siblings and their parents. Cathy, whose mother had lost a child (three years old) during her pregnancy

with Cathy and another child (neonatal death) when Cathy was two years old, lived with the ghostly "presence" of these losses all her life. She felt that she could not get close to her mother, that she was not "good enough", and never really overcame feelings of being-to-blame and existential guilt when her only living sibling died much later.

During this time of upheaval, the desire for oneness and wholeness is also initially experienced in relation to the parents, who too have been robbed of the possibility of relating to their child. This is the unique dilemma of the sibling in grief. Elena's yearning is heartfelt:

"I would have *loved* to have spent more time with him [i.e. brother] but I guess that is impossible ... my mother says the same..."

The participant's dilemma refers to her own grief and missing of her sibling and the awareness of her parents' pain which, like an echo, duplicates her bereavement, and amplifies it. Thus, grief for the lost sibling and grief for the "lost" parents seem to run parallel but independently of each other, the one amplifying the other in a continuous push-pull motion. Externally the participants have to cope, but internally they remain active as they silently attempt to make sense of the loss and to fill the gap. Retaining the connection, holding on to their sibling through lived memories, and outwardly continuing with life as "normal", holds them from slipping into the abyss, from breaking down completely. Initially the participants avoid confronting the intensity of their own grief. This is a form of preservation; the preservation of the sibling relationship, of self and of the family. They put on a mask. While this conceals the truth, it also has positives. Had they grieved simultaneously with parents, they would have disintegrated. There is a genuine need not to fall into the "void". If we all grieve together - one goes down, we all go down. They cannot afford to face the emptiness. Keeping occupied, having a task to complete, helps to structure "time" and provides a purpose in their lives. Heidegger's (1927/1962) "care"/solicitude (*Fursorge*) becomes an anchor point that provides the illusion of wholeness and helps them to recover a familiar sense of self, assisting them in getting through the early part of the grief process. Memories become significant in retaining the attachment to the lost sibling and in recovering the part of self that had been lost through the death.

7.1.4 Remembering and Forgetting (Memories)

In the desire to bridge the gap of separateness and to retain the closeness with their lost sibling, memories were significant. With the loss, the missing and the sense of loneliness, memories provided the connection to the deceased brother or sister. Bereaved siblings repeatedly reviewed and reinterpreted experiences with, and memories of their sibling, thereby maintaining a sense of continuity; filling the gap in the present and the emptiness that threatened in the future.

Freud (1917/1957) emphasises that with the loss of a significant other, each of the memories and expectations that are bound up with the loved other is brought up and attachment to the lost "object" is hyper-invested in the service of resolution of the grief. Memory helps us to retain a sense of unity and oneness with the lost loved one and enables us to continue with life in the absence of the significant other. Memories span the gap between the past and the present and open up the future once again. Remembrance - memory - brings the deceased sibling back into the life of the surviving sibling. In order to remember, however, we have to acknowledge the truth; we must confront our grief and the pain of loss. There is no way around it. With the thought of the lost loved one, grief wells up as we are confronted by this reality. Indeed, memory is sustained by sorrow. As Alapack (1995) notes:

"Sorrow safeguards truth, preserves it. It endures in making present and sustains as present even as it moves forward into the future ... Sorrow recognises its pain and re-members it, without being overwhelmed by it or wallowing in it."

Memory makes present what is absent. While in life, the sibling may have been absent in his or her presence; in death, the sibling becomes "present" in his or her absence. The deceased sibling, although not physically present, is reinstated within the self and within the family circle through recalling and re-"membering". Attachment to memories and meanings of the past helps to maintain a sense of continuity in the present with which to move forward. In recalling, reviewing past interactions, and particularly in sharing stories of the deceased sibling, new meanings emerge. These provide comfort and enable the bereaved sibling to synthesise a new relationship with the lost brother or sister.

However, memories can also entrap us. We can be haunted by memories and/or live in the past. Anxiety about losing precious memories can block the grief work as we dwell on the past, on what we did or did not do. The process of remembering and recalling all facets of the relationship, although painful, facilitates the grief work, frees the imagination and opens up the future. Remembering and sorrowing lessen the pain and enable us to put the memories to rest; we do not forget, but in fact remember our sibling better: not as a correlate of our projections or needs, but as a real and whole person. When the pain subsides, we find the closeness that we yearned for. This is poignantly expressed by C. S. Lewis (1976: 52) following the loss of his wife: "And suddenly, at the very moment when, so far, I mourned H. least, I remembered her best...It was as if the lifting of the sorrow removed a barrier".

In the present study it was apparent that the participants had reflected deeply on their sibling's life and death and what he or she meant to them. Recall provided presence, maintaining the attachment to the lost brother or sister in the demand to deal with the reality of the loss. However, the way they remembered and perceived their brother or sister depended on what they chose to remember and

understand of the past. Images that remained frozen/fixed preserved the sibling relationship as it existed, providing continuity and maintaining a familiar sense of self (Dia and Elena).

Although some memories were painful, remained hidden and were often difficult to recall, they were nevertheless not lost: they emerged later as and when the participants were able to deal with more. Schopenhauer, 1851/1970 (in Alapack, 2006: 11) asserts: "The memory may well become confused by what is put into it, but it cannot really be forfeited...memory is bottomless." Following the loss of a loved one, we are wrapped up in our memories. Sometimes we believe that that is all we "have". At other times, it seems that the memories, in fact, control us. They hold us captive and will not let us go. Being able to remember our loved one with pleasure and delight, without being overcome with grief all over again, and without fear that we will forget (causing us desperately to cling to each memory to guard against "losing" him or her altogether), enables us to engage in life more fully. In the knowledge that he or she is forever a part of us, we do not have constantly to work to assure ourselves that this is true.

However, for some participants, memories were so painful that these were blocked in order to cope with the intensity of the pain. If she is to remain functional, if she is to support parents and not be overwhelmed with emotions that she cannot deal with immediately, she cannot remember everything. Yet in "forgetting", as Cathy notes, one does not lose the memories; rather, one "forgets" to remember. With anguish, she acknowledges:

"Sometimes it dims and then at other times the things that you can't remember, you remember very well again. I think it depends on your emotional state, perhaps. You want to remember, and what you don't, you don't."

Forgetting is therefore not a mere lapse of memory, it is a "backing away *from* one's ownmost having-been in a way that is closed off from oneself" (Heidegger, 1927/1996: 311-312); it is a backing away from what is too dreadful to contemplate. Frederick Nietzsche, 1887/1992 (in Alapack, 2006) conceptualises forgetting as an *active* and intentional process. He discusses the "ability to forget" and links memory to health and happiness:

"Forgetting is no mere force of inertia as the superficial imagine; it is rather an active... positive faculty of repression that is responsible for the fact that what we experience and absorb enters our consciousness little while we are digesting it (one might call the process 'impsychation')...To close the doors and windows of consciousness for a time; to remain undisturbed by the noise and struggle of our underworld...; a little quietness, a little *tabula rasa* of the consciousness to make room for new things...that is the purpose of active forgetfulness, which is like a doorkeeper, a preserver of psychic order, repose...so that it will be immediately obvious how there could be no happiness, nor cheerfulness, no hope...no *present* without forgetfulness" (Nietzsche, 1887/1992, in Alapack, 2006: 13).

Pertinent to the experience of sibling loss, Nietzsche's elucidation of "forgetting" as a "work" or labour reveals that the health of bereaved siblings within a family context depends upon the balance of knowing how to forget as well as how to remember. Nietzsche writes that the inability to forget sabotages decision-making, blocks healthy action and compromises creativity. Unable to forget, we hold on to our grief impeding forward mobility and unable to imagine that we can ever be happy again. Forgetting is not pathological. Rather remembering and forgetting can co-exist, not as incompatibilities, but in a dynamic synthesis. "*Remembering* is possible only on the basis of forgetting," writes Heidegger (1927/1996: 312), "not the other way around".

This study reveals that in the process of coping with the loss there is a vacillation between remembering and forgetting as the participants approach and evade the pain of the loss. Vacillation arises at the outset as they struggle to digest what has happened. Later, in the awareness of their parents' intense pain, the struggle intensifies to the point of existential chaos. Dia felt the need to "close the door against the storm" outside (i.e. her parents' grief) so that she did not have to be reminded of the pain all the time. Elena did not want to remember her brother with pain and held on to positive memories of him. Because of her indirect involvement in the circumstances of the loss, Cathy closed herself off from painful memories in an attempt to forget what had happened. Forgetting here served the function not only of trying to un-do what could not be undone ("If I had not insisted that he drive me to the station, he would still be alive"), but also of coping with the devastating loss. As with Kubler-Ross' (1969/1985) stage of "Denial and Isolation" and Bowlby's phase of "Numbing", "forgetting" acts as a buffer against the pain, allowing the bereaved sibling to collect herself and regain some stability.

Though overpowering, and at times immobilising, the remembering-forgetting dialectic decreases as the loss is assimilated a "bit" more. However, this is not accomplished within a year or two. In addition, returning to the past is not always intentional, and hidden memories can break through unexpectedly, evoking feelings of pain and instability. This can occur many years after the loss of the sibling.

For some participants revisiting the past was avoided since this evoked intense pain, hurt and/or guilt. However, in most instances returning to the past provided clarity in the present and accessibility to the future. In returning to the past, new meaning emerges which allows the bereaved sibling to move forward.

7.1.5 The Developmental Challenge (Intimacy vs. Isolation)

Although before the loss the participants' pre-loss selves appeared to be unified towards their own goals, the loss of their sibling interrupts the natural rhythm of individuation-separation that has been

going on between parent and child, and between siblings, over the course of their lives. In this extreme situation, while there is a need to individuate, there is a desire not to be separate. In order to separate, we need to feel related/attached. Thus, although as young adults the participants had started to move in different directions to their sibling and were fairly independent of parents, the death of a sibling *forces* an inevitable step in the direction of absolute separateness (the sibling is dead; the survivor is alive) and awakens feelings of loneliness (isolation) and longing. Because it is an irreversible step without any hope of recovering the lost sibling or repairing what has happened, Bowlby's (1973, 1979, 1980) attachment theory would have it that a step backwards can be expected. For most of the participants though, the "step backwards" is initially a step *towards* the parents: an involvement with preserving and sustaining primary attachments without falling back into the oneness with mother. With the loss of one significant relationship, there is a desire to prevent further loss. The need to protect parents, to make a difference, to effect some change, no matter how small, becomes paramount.

Young adulthood is a time of beginnings. According to Erikson (1982/1994: 32-33), the task of the young adult is the challenge of establishing interpersonal *intimacy* and the conflict that needs to be resolved is *isolation*. Other tasks include: working to establish emotional and physical separation (leaving home), and achieving competency and mastery. Erikson believed that the virtue that defines intimacy for young adults is *affiliation* or *love*. When the loss of a brother or sister coincides with this psychosocial developmental stage, the bereaved sibling is faced with having to cope with a significant loss and with the developmental crisis of *isolation*. Corr (1998: 151) refers to this as a "double crisis"; Hogan and DeSantis (1992) call it the "double jeopardy". This study confirms this notion. However, it is evidently more than a "double" crisis/jeopardy; it is, in fact, a triple crisis. The bereaved sibling is faced with having to cope with the *symbolic* loss of the family and the *real* loss of a brother or sister as she stands on the threshold of *leaving home*. Can she risk letting go of the family at this stage?

Winnicott (1958b/1990) observed the need, in relation to the child, for a secure base that holds the possibility of "refuelling" and allows the child to move away from primary attachments and to explore the world. This has relevance for young adults as well. Gail Sheehy's (1976) concept of "pulling up roots" and the "rebound home" reflects this need for a safe haven to which we can return when things get tough as we move out and face the world alone. During young adulthood one is acutely aware of the isolation/loneliness that threatens. However, with the loss of a sibling, all sense of relatedness is felt to be lost. One has not only lost, but one is also lost. Not only is the family fragmented, but the sibling structure has also been ruptured. Thus the conflict of "isolation" that one is dealing with in this normative developmental stage is accentuated in mourning and challenges the bereaved sibling even more. Faced with the challenge of interpersonal intimacy and the fear of isolation, one needs to feel that one's roots are intact. With the loss, this does not seem possible ... at least for a while. Time is

needed to deal with the loss before one can face the developmental conflict of isolation, of letting go of familiar structures, of leaving home.

Letting go of early attachments, breaking away from the "magic circle of the mother and family" (Jung 1974: 168) and the anticipation of being alone, is itself a loss. Even without a death, separating from parents is an extremely difficult developmental task and the need to feel connected is always present, but with the death, this does not seem possible at all. As Alapack and Alapack (1984: 66) assert: "Frightfully, earnestly to leave home is a death experience". Separating from parents now would be tantamount to another "death"; it would create another space that could fragment the self and the family even further. The participants themselves could also lose the final link to their sibling and their roots. Thus, the loss of a sibling delays the natural separation process. The being-at-home appears to have the function not only of protecting their parents and allaying the participants' fears that they could lose other significant people, but also helps to maintain the connection to their sibling and gives them time to recover a continuous sense of self before moving on with their own lives. This is evidenced by all the participants as they struggle to cope with their loss. Although on the threshold of leaving home at the time of the death, Cathy makes a conscious decision (a "pact") to stay at home for a certain period (3 years) in order to support and protect her parents. Dia, a radically "free" spirit, experiences tremendous conflict between her own needs for independence and the realisation that for her parents separation would be another "loss", an abandonment, and she too delays her departure. In Elena's situation, where leaving home was contrary to cultural values and norms, staying at home was not so much an active decision *not* to leave home but one of "being there" for her parents as much as possible.

For these participants, concern/*affiliation/love* (Erikson, 1982/1994) initially revolves around the parents. Sustaining parents and helping them get back into "normal life" becomes the main *challenge*. They put aside their own needs and hold on to daily routine and familiar structures that provide continuity and stability. By holding on to the "now" (caring for parents) and the past (through memories), a degree of continuity is maintained. This is an important initial step in coping with loss in the family. It is only when there is a lingering in the primary relationships or a holding-on (clinging) on the part of parents, that the challenge of establishing interpersonal *intimacy* with others outside the family is delayed and the conflict of *isolation* may remain unresolved. Dia's brother-in-law alerts her to this risk: "You will never get a husband if you stay!" Although extremely traumatic for some, most of the participants in this study finally did succeed in moving away from home and establishing other intimate relationships.

Pertinent to the findings of the present study, it would seem that sibling loss, within the context of the family, also calls into question previous developmental crises and challenges, which have already

been encountered by the individual on her journey through life, i.e. trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame/doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, and challenges surviving siblings to deal with these again. Unresolved developmental issues, Erikson tells us, can recur later in the life cycle - if a conflict is not resolved, it is returned to later in an attempt to find resolution and move forward. If during the individual's development any of these conflicts were not adequately resolved, the death of a sibling will intensify that conflict. Therefore, one meets it again in the new context if healing is to take place. This becomes a major challenge, as many of the developmental tasks parallel the tasks of normal grief: loss shatters one's sense of trust in a predictable world and one's identity is shaken. The confusion and difficulty in making sense of the loss, and the constant internal review of one's life and the life and death of the deceased sibling, may facilitate resolution of these issues or, conversely, may affirm mistrust, doubt/shame, guilt, inferiority or role confusion. In addition, the way that the parents deal with the loss (e.g. silence and secrecy surrounding the death, idealisation of the deceased, and anger and rage over the loss) may compound these issues and evoke doubt, guilt, and a sense of being devalued, particularly if primary attachments were not secure to begin with. This was evident in the present study. Cathy, who did not experience a secure relationship with her mother, experienced even more guilt, loneliness, alienation and a sense of worthlessness following her brother's death, and was compelled to deal with these issues again. For Dia, the loss of her sister brought into focus the fact that her sister was special and that she had had a closer relationship to her mother than Dia had. Although Dia's relationship with her mother was satisfactory, the loss evoked doubts about her own worth and her right to survival, and she too was challenged to deal with this issue again. Thus, sibling loss is not only a *chronological* event, it is also a *developmental* challenge.

In terms of individuation-separation, it has been documented (Graham, 1988; Engel, 1975) that this involves mother, father *and* sibling and that frequently a brother or sister can assist us in breaking away from home. Accordingly, could the presence of other surviving siblings have eased the sense of responsibility experienced by these participants to support parents and somehow facilitated the separation from them? Dia feels divided in this respect. On the one hand, she is very clear that if she were to have had other living siblings it could have been helpful in the sense that they would have understood the desire to help parents to cope with their devastating loss ("Come let's help mom and dad cope"). Their presence could also have diluted her parents' focus on her (the only remaining child), thus making separation less traumatic. On the other hand, she also realises that having younger siblings could possibly have left her with even more responsibility (i.e. to care for them as well), since she recognised that her parents were immobilised by their grief and unable to cope with any other demands. This would have been an even heavier burden.

Bowlby (1961a, 1961b, 1973, 1979, 1980) sees separation as loss, but is separation the same as loss through death? How do brothers and sisters experience a natural separation from each other? From this study, it would appear that the participants do not experience serious problems in "separating" from each other in the sense of travelling overseas, going to university, establishing other intimate relationships, getting married, etc. Indeed, as young adults, all the participants had started to move in different directions to their sibling. But the potential for dialogue, for relation, is ever present. Even if they have gone their separate ways, and even live in different continents, "potential presence" implies that the siblings can still be present to one another at some point. This type of separation is very different to loss through death and siblings are very aware of the difference.

7.1.6 Paradox and Polarity

Another salient feature of the experience of sibling loss is the intensely ambiguous and paradoxical nature of the experience. Confronted by the reality of the death of their sibling and the meaning of the loss for themselves and parents, the participants find themselves in an existential crisis not knowing whether to grieve or not to grieve, "to be or not to be".

Ambiguity and ambivalence are intrinsic aspects of the sibling relationship where conflict, rivalry and even hostility, as well as love and loyalty, and concern and caring, exist side by side and constantly fluctuate. Freud (1917/1957) tells us that for normal mourning to proceed, one needs to be aware of "*who*" and "*what*" has been lost in the losing of a significant other. Unlike the loss of a parent, a child, spouse, or friend, where one can immediately identify who and what has been lost, with the loss of a sibling there seem to be no simple or immediate answers to these questions.

All the participants were painfully aware of *whom* and what they had lost; yet, for some, confusion arose as they perceived the loss primarily in terms of the parents' loss of a *child* and only secondarily as a loss of their brother or sister. This perception was strengthened by the responses or lack of responses of others, who frequently rallied around the parents or the spouse of the deceased brother or sister, and in the process the bereaved sibling was forgotten. Also, because the sibling relationship is such a taken-for-granted relationship, the deeper (and fuller) meanings of "what" had been lost in the losing of a brother or a sister only emerged over time. For the bereaved sibling, therefore, the experience is intensely polarised.

On the *individual-side*, the surviving sibling wants to grieve the loss of her brother or sister but also desires to retain the connection to her sibling, her "other self". Her grief allows an involvement with her sibling, but also confronts her with the pain of loss and the fear of further fragmentation. There is ambivalence about accepting the reality of the death. She wants to forget the death, but at the same time desperately wants to keep her sibling's memory alive and thinks constantly about him or her.

By the time they had reached young adulthood, the participants had experienced many different kinds of relationships with their siblings. Thus, a variety of emotions and meanings were experienced and emerged over time. The sometimes close and loving, sometimes hostile and even rivalry-filled sibling relationship that had been fraught with ambiguities even before the death, reactivates emotions, that for some, cannot be dealt with immediately. Thinking about the loss of future possibilities and relationships, Dia realises that there would have been many positives and many negatives. It would have been helpful to have had the support of her sister in coping with their aged parents but it could also have been more difficult because she and her sister handled situations very differently. The longing for sisterly support is polarised by the awareness that they were not really "pals" at the time of her sister's death, yet Dia knows deep down that they would have been there for each other. She also recognises the possibility of greater closeness in the future.

On the *family-side*, the experience of being overwhelmed by the loss of a brother or sister is polarised by the equally strong awareness of the parents' deep sorrow. There is a tension between, on the one hand, mourning the loss while not being drawn into, and being swamped by the intensity of the parents' grief and, on the other hand, the desire to support and protect the parents and not to burden them with additional pain. Simultaneously, the participants attempt to deal with their own grief and to make sense of their loss. Cathy reflects that she herself was "emotionally destroyed" after the loss, but, "with all the pain and guilt", she still had to contend with her mother's grief and rage. Elena was aware that, like her parents, she also felt like "stopping life" but realised that she was the only one that could sustain her parents and had to be strong for them. In this respect, the participants' grief for the lost sibling and grief for the "lost" parents truly overlap and flow into each other, creating a "whirlpool" of shifting, fluid emotions. For Dia, keeping her grief separate becomes essential in maintaining a sense of stability and integration within the prevailing existential chaos.

With everything changing and external roles shifting, participants find themselves wanting to hold on to a familiar sense of self yet, in some instances, they also attempt to compensate for their parents' loss by becoming more like the deceased sibling. Thus, another polarity for the surviving sibling is the tension between the concern for their parents and the frustration, helplessness, hopelessness and despair that emerge as they realise that there is nothing that they can do to mitigate their parents' pain. Anger erupts in time over their parents' unremitting sorrow and their tendency to idealise the deceased sibling. For some participants, the idealisation of the deceased sibling almost borders on "idolatry" and gradually begins to erode the surviving siblings' confidence and self-worth. As they relate and continue to relate to the very person that is suffering (i.e. mother), they question their adequacy, their very right to *be*. Paradoxically, while the surviving sibling may feel that she is lacking (Cathy and Dia) in comparison to her deceased brother or sister, and may also feel that she herself is not noticed, she also experiences the attention focused on her. In the present study the participants felt entrapped,

not able to be themselves and yet not able to be the person that mother longed for the most - the deceased brother or sister. For all the participants it becomes a strange dialectic where the surviving sibling feels bound by the parents' anxiety associated with loss, while simultaneously the parents remain preoccupied with the deceased child.

Closely associated with the experience of increased attention is the tension between wanting to move on with their own lives and simultaneously not being able to ignore their parents' suffering. They need to be there for their parents, but, paradoxically, and on a deeper level, they also need time to deal with the emotional chaos within; they need to deal with the past before moving towards the future. The confusion of ambiguous, conflicted and paradoxical emotions cannot be faced immediately, and the participants struggle against the changes. Keeping themselves occupied gives them a sense of purpose and a degree of control over an unpredictable world and the illusion that life need not be altered.

On the *social/relational-side*, the participants become aware of changes in their relationships with others, and ambivalence arises. Paradoxically, the bereaved sibling wants others to be around, but she also needs to remain functional and not to lose control of intense inner emotions. While initially there is a spontaneous distancing or even withdrawal from others, later some of the participants find that others cannot cope with their grief or find it hard to be with the grief-stricken family and so avoid them. In most instances, attention is focused on the bereaved parents, the primary mourners, in the belief that a child's death is unbearable. This resonates with the surviving sibling's own perception or belief, and the participants withdraw even further. Elena's ambivalence becomes apparent when she mentions that she sensed that her friends were uncomfortable talking about death and loss, and that she wanted to spare them any embarrassment by *not* talking about her feelings. Later, however, she acknowledges that her tendency to conceal her pain from her friends in fact placed *them* in an awkward position. Dia also acknowledges that her friends were there for her, but that she did not expect much support from them because she realised that they all had other priorities. Yet, she too realised that she would not have been able to talk about the loss for fear of "collapsing altogether".

The present study suggests that a bereaved young adult sibling is continually engaged in the paradoxical projects of wanting to grieve and attempting not to grieve. In the final analysis, while the pain of loss is intense, for these participants the loss remains too little mourned.

7. 1.7 The Pain of Loss (Grief)

Parkes (1972/1975) defines loss as the absence of the loved one (deprivation), and grief as the reaction to the loss. In terms of the findings of this study, it is apparent that a bereaved sibling's grief embraces many of the emotions experienced at the loss of any significant relationship as outlined by Lindemann (1944), including: shock, disbelief, fear and numbness; a sense of distance from the world

of others; emptiness; a sense of not being physically well; anger; remorse and guilt; sadness and missing; and not wanting to "let go" of the deceased. However, there are various factors that distinguish sibling loss from other losses: the way the grief unfolds, its duration and impact, and the essentially relational and paradoxical nature of the experience. The present study reveals that the loss of a sibling in young adulthood is first and foremost a mourning of the "living-dead" (the parents) and only later a mourning for the lost sibling. The participants' *postponement* of their grief concurs with Lindemann's (1944) observation that when the bereaved individual needs to maintain the morale of others, the mourning process can be delayed or postponed.

Freud (1917) regards sorrow as a normal reaction to the loss of a loved person. He avers that mourning is an inevitable, normal and healthy response to the loss of a significant other. Bereaved people know "*whom*" and "*what*" they have lost in the losing of the loved one and yearn for the return of the lost person. In normal grief, the bereaved person is conscious of the *meaning* of his/her loss, is aware that he or she has suffered a significant loss, and can tolerate the ambiguity that every attachment carries, with its joy, inevitable loss and pain. He emphasise that the painful mood of mourning generally lasts for a long time because people do not readily let go of a loved one.

Bowlby (1980) identifies four phases of grief through which the bereaved adult must pass in order to accomplish the work of mourning: "numbing" (lasting from a few hours to a week); "yearning and searching"; "disorganisation and despair"; "detachment and reorganisation". While these provide a map of the grief of adults, they do not adequately conceptualise the process of sibling loss. For the participants there is indeed an experience of tremendous shock, fear and numbness, but the numbness seems to last a lot longer than suggested by Bowlby (1980). The fact that it is fundamentally a double loss makes it difficult to understand sibling loss in terms of the general ideas of grief and mourning. Siblings may seem to be "pathological" in their mourning if viewed from this perspective, when in fact they are not. In this study, the bereaved siblings seemed to move from the initial shock, fear, disbelief and numbness to a phase of supporting parents and reorganisation of the self within the family, to a phase of emotional chaos and despair surrounding the relentless grief of parents and their deterioration, and only much later were they able to let go of their intense emotions and openly grieve over their brother or sister.

Kierkegaard has also helped to deepen our knowledge of loss and sorrow (normal grief). Based on his own suffering, he provides us with an acute understanding of what it means to lose a loved one, which seems more closely to depict the grief of bereaved siblings. Kierkegaard (1843/1959b:167) posits that "grief is secretive, silent, solitary, and seeks to retire into itself". Grief is not visible in the same way as, for example, joy is. The loss of a loved one leaves the survivor "heartsick" and in perpetual longing. The bereaved person questions whether or not he or she is guilty (Kierkegaard, 1847/1962;

1845/1988). Kierkegaard notes that the bereaved will blame himself or herself, no matter how or why it happened. At some level we will accuse ourselves of something that we did, or failed to do. Depression, according to Kierkegaard, arises only when there was something wrong in the relationship to begin with (Freud's concept of ambivalence).

This study reveals that the grief of the bereaved young adult sibling is indeed "secretive, silent, solitary..." and invisible, and concurs with Kierkegaard's description of sorrow. Siblings who live together over an extended period of time, and share a space and the attention of parents, create a bond that is intrinsically ambivalent and evokes strong feelings of love and anger/hate, and of rivalry/competition and loyalty. When the sibling dies, there are many opportunities for guilt or self-blame. Within the family, there is also the risk of being blamed by or blaming others, for something that we did or did not do - particularly if relationships between the siblings, or between parent(s) and the surviving sibling(s), were hostile before the loss.

Pertinent to the grief of the bereaved sibling, the individuals that I interviewed had also experienced a psychic trauma. The sudden and violent death of someone close in age and from one's own family (Moss & Moss, 1986) is a particularly traumatic experience. As succinctly expressed by C.S. Lewis (1976:1): "No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid...At other times it feels like being mildly drunk, or concussed". The sense of unreality, the feeling that this "cannot be happening" is strengthened by the awareness of their parents' profound grief and aspects of traumatic stress as described by Lindemann (1944): detachment, efforts to avoid conversation about the loss, restriction of affect, surfaced in these participants. The warding off of unpleasant affect becomes central and avoidance defences come into play.

Within the context of the family, there are positive and negative aspects to the participants' tendency to close in on themselves and to suspend their grief. For Dia, remaining functional served the purpose of maintaining emotional stability and avoiding being overwhelmed by intense emotions, while still having time to deal with her own loss; for Elena, the desire to be there for her parents as much as possible, to be "strong" for them, precluded the open expression of her intense pain. For Cathy, remaining stuck in the feeling of not owning the grief was amplified by her own sense of guilt related to her brother's death, and by her mother's attacking behaviour, and the lack of acknowledgement from others that she too had suffered a significant loss.

- **Distancing and connectedness**

Freud (1917) reminds us that the mood of mourning is painful, and is accompanied by a loss of interest in the outside world, a loss of a capacity to invest in a new love object or ideal, and a turning away from any activity unrelated to the loved object. We become absorbed with the lost loved one

and everything else seems unreal: "There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me" (C. S. Lewis, 1976: 1).

The present study reveals that the loss of a sibling involves a sense of distancing of self from the world and others. Although generally experienced at the loss of any significant relationship (Freud, 1917/1957; Bowlby, 1979, 1980; Lindemann, 1944; Parkes, 1972/1975), this sense of distancing is amplified and extended in the case of sibling loss. Not only do the participants experience a sense of unreality and distance from the world and others but also from their parents, who, much as they would like, cannot be the same towards them as they were before the loss; yet, there is still the need to remain connected to others. Even if the surviving sibling wants the space, actually asks others to leave her alone (Dia) or feels unable to talk about her feelings (Cathy, Dia and Elena), she still needs to feel linked to others. As noted by Lewis (1976: 1), "... I want the others to be about me...If only they would talk to one another and not to me". For Dia, it was important to have others around, since it relieved her of the heavy responsibility of sustaining her parents and of the pain of involvement in the family grief. She needed the space in order to deal with her confused emotions privately and realised the importance of the presence of others, not for what they *say* but for what they *do*. Cathy, on the other hand, did not want the space. Left as an only "child", feeling excluded from the family grief and haunted by her guilt, she desperately needed to feel linked to others so that she could confront her grief and move forward. Although Elena could not talk about her deeper emotions, she valued the presence of her brother's friends and the opportunity to listen to "happy" stories about him.

Essentially for survivor siblings all they want to know is that they are connected and that their parents have support. This enables them to enter the emptiness and deal with their loss. In the present study, the open expression of their grief only becomes possible later, usually in the presence of a trusted other: someone outside the family grief (e.g. a spouse or counsellor), who does not have any expectations as to "how" the surviving sibling should grieve and does not impose his or her own meanings on the loss.

- **Anger, Pain and Sadness**

Bowlby (1973, 1979, 1980) views anger, including anger at the deceased, as part of the normal grief process. For Bowlby, anger follows the phase of "numbing" (shock and disbelief) and is part of bereaved person's attempt to recover the lost object; to scold or reproach the deceased for abandoning him or her. Similarly, for Kubler-Ross (1969/1985), "anger" follows the stage of "denial and isolation" and signifies a point where we cannot deny the death any longer and are then freed to become angry.

In this small sample, none of the participants expressed any anger towards their deceased sibling, only a deep sadness about the loss. Implicitly, there may have been some anger, as participants variously described their siblings as nervous and even somewhat reckless at times. Dia described her sister as "panicky" and felt convinced that *she* (her sister) had pulled at the steering wheel (and, by implication, had caused the accident); Elena acknowledged that her brother was a "speed freak" and that this ultimately (almost wilfully) led to his death. Cathy reported that her brother had had a previous accident and had been hospitalised. Yet, the participants themselves never recognised this as anger.

However, is the absence of anger towards the deceased sibling simply a question of "denial"?

Freud (1917/1957) and Klein (1940) offer other possible understandings of the absence of anger towards the deceased. Freud's observations led him to believe that, for the most part, most of us protect the lost loved one; we honour the dead one toward whom we feel ambivalent. In the process of working through the loss, we hyper-invest in the lost loved one, idealising and glorifying the one who is dead and gone. It is only when we split and aim the anger at the self, absorb the blame and experience guilt, that there is a risk of depression.

Klein (1940: 158) views "idealisation" as an essential intermediate step in mental development, where the idealised mother is essential for security and for life itself. In normal mourning, idealisation becomes a way of reinstating and preserving the loved person, the "good object" (idealised) within the self. Klein argues that when anger is experienced towards the lost loved person, the process of idealisation is disturbed. This shakes the mourner's belief in his or her "good inner objects" and threatens with annihilation. The mourner derives great relief from recalling the lost person's kindness and good qualities. This is partly due to the reassurance he experiences from keeping his loved object for the time being as an idealised one. Like Freud, Klein recognises the risk of the mourner becoming depressed should the anger be directed towards the self.

We can recognise in some of the participants the applicability of the above theorists' descriptions of grief as a state often characterised by a turning away from the reality of the loss (i.e. "denial"), identification with and idealisation of the lost brother or sister (Elena), and ambivalence and the presence of "guilt" (Cathy and Dia). Thus, based on the findings of the study, it would seem that there is indeed denial, but that it is more than this. The absence of anger may be accounted for not only by the fact that it is difficult to be angry with a young vital person who has died (a "victim"), but also by the fact that, in the relationship between the siblings, anger, irritation and frustration would be openly expressed while the sibling was still alive. This was evidenced by all the participants. In addition, it is clear that there was a powerful bond between the siblings that transcended the satisfaction of own needs, and siblings were aware of this. For example, Elena frequently fought with her brother, but just

as frequently yielded to his requests for assistance and supported and protected him. The bond prevailed irrespective of how angry she became with her brother. Similarly, Dia was very aware of the differences between herself and her sister and while she would become irritated by her sister's fearful and "panicky" behaviour, she was equally aware that she would have protected her sister should anyone have treated her with disrespect. Although Cathy also became angry with her brother (as on the night of the accident), implicitly she too would have done anything to protect him. However, because of her involvement in the circumstances of his death, she directed the anger at herself. Remorse, guilt and self-reproach, strengthened by her mother's rejection of her, grew out of proportion and haunted her for a long time.

For some participants, anger/irritation/annoyance later becomes an issue. It flares up more in response to their parents' way of handling the loss (Cathy and Dia), or is directed towards God (Dia) for allowing such a terrible thing to happen. In this respect, the anger, rather than being "displaced", may be seen as a reaction to the changes wrought by the death and an attempt to make sense of the loss.

The pain of the loss is initially intense and spontaneous. Later, the pain is amplified by the parents' deep hurt and by their responses to the loss. Letting go of the pain does not really feel possible. There is a sense of evading the pain but holding on to the negative feelings (the fear, hurt and guilt), which must be distinguished from earlier phases of more spontaneous hurt and pain. This holding on appears to have the function, at least for some, of moving the surviving sibling from her "inner" feelings and having to confront her own grief. This grief concerns both the loss of what was and of what might have been. On a deeper level, it is the loss of a particular way of viewing herself that the participant tries to avoid. This reflects the deeper level of meaning that is not yet entirely clear.

A deep sadness was experienced by all the participants. The lingering sadness entails a preoccupation with memories of the deceased sibling. This preoccupation appears to involve two dimensions: the immediate obvious felt longing for the physical presence of their sibling, and the deeper meaning that the loss has for her life (the gradual awareness of the loss of future possibilities and relationships, and the anxiety of being confronted by loneliness in later life). All the participants expressed sadness about the irreplaceable loss of a person who grew up with them, someone who shared the same history. Dia and Elena both expressed sadness about a future without their brother or sister, an important referent throughout life, a source of support, sharing and companionship. For all the participants, it was also their deceased *sibling's* loss for which they grieved: the fact that the life and potential of such a young person was cut short. Again, the surviving sibling will not typically attempt to uncover the deeper meaning of the loss during the earlier part of the grief process. It is the more immediate experience, involving the missing of the physical presence of the brother or sister and the concern for parents, that absorbs them.

The loss of a brother or sister *is* very sad, and the sadness and missing is present and persists. It would appear from the findings of the study that as surviving siblings move through different passages in their lives, they realise the fuller significance and meaning that the loss of their sibling has for them and their sorrow is reactivated. In this respect, sibling loss can be seen as a developmental "crisis" - in the Eriksonian sense of a turning point, a crucial period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential. In the preliminary study, Angie comments: "The loss of my sister was a pivotal moment in my life..."

- **"Guilt": Concern and Responsibility**

Although not all the participants in the study experienced "guilt" over the loss of their sibling, it has been documented as one of the pervasive emotions of bereaved siblings. Particularly when the death is violent, or is sudden and unexpected (as with all the siblings in this study), there are countless reasons for surviving siblings to feel responsible or "guilty".

In many respects, the "guilt" of a surviving sibling resembles that of a parent. Although parents remain the primary protectors of their children, siblings frequently share in the sense of responsibility for the welfare of their brother or sister. Just as parents are prepared to die for their children, so too, it would seem, are siblings. When death strikes one of their "own", there are countless opportunities for pointing a finger at themselves. Where the sibling is somehow involved in the circumstances of the death (Cathy), the feeling of being-to-blame may be deeply seated, and can even be felt as a finger pointed by parents (or from the grave) for not having taken good enough care of their brother or sister. This form of guilt is unlikely to be shared with anyone, and is intensely damaging. This is evidenced in Cathy's experience. She becomes locked in her "guilt" and this not only delays her mourning but also impacts negatively on her physical and emotional wellbeing.

In the context of the experience of the loss of a brother or sister, the term "guilt" has meanings, overtones, and dimensions beyond its use in the "natural attitude". The spectrum of guilt experienced by bereaved siblings is broad and subtly nuanced. It manifests itself in different ways at different times during the grief process of the bereaved sibling. There are also variations of this emotion not only between participants but also within the same participant at different times. Our understanding of the term requires amplification and clarification. Some preliminary distinctions of the specific ways that "guilt" reveals itself, or rather plays itself out, in the experience of sibling loss, seem to be in order here, as this has been referred to in much of the bereavement literature relating to childhood and adolescent sibling loss.

The ready-at-hand use of the word "guilt" or self-blame - namely of "being responsible for an offence or wrongdoing"; "culpability for crime or lesser breach of regulation"; "remorseful awareness of

having done something wrong" (American Heritage Dictionary); and "the fact of having committed a wrong", "a crime, debt" (Klein, 1971) - does not adequately encompass all the meanings of this emotion for the surviving sibling. Only one participant (Cathy) experienced guilt feelings in the sense of "doing wrong", of feeling "responsible", or "being to blame" for the loss. Cathy's guilt arose through her indirect involvement in the circumstances of her brother's accident, and to this day she feels responsible for his death; something which she has never shared with her parents. However, it is not only guilt in relation to her deceased sibling: there is a sense of being-to-blame for the loss *and* a fear of reprisal/retaliation from her mother for not having taken greater care to ensure her brother's safety. This haunted her for many years and effectively stopped her mourning even before she had begun the grief work. Later, when her mother angrily acknowledges that she had lost her "favourite child", Cathy's "guilt" intensifies as she realises that in her mother's eyes her brother had always come first. She doubts her ability to achieve anything, her right to exist, and even her entitlement to mourn. It is evident that the "guilt" that Cathy refers to is far more encompassing and damaging than the term denotes. She feels "guilt" in relation to self (she is "worthless"), in relation to her deceased sibling (for not caring enough), and in relation to her parents (she had not been a good "keeper of her brother"). Thus, within the context of sibling loss, "guilt" is a multifaceted, undulating and dynamic concept that evolves over time, and its texture contains what Buber (1957: 117) refers to as an "ontic" character, i.e. "the fact that man can become guilty and know it".

Although most of the participants use the word "guilt", the meaning of the lived emotion varies. For Cathy it is a feeling not only of having done wrong, but of *being* wrong, i.e. feeling "guilty" that she is still alive while her sibling has died; a felt sense that the wrong child had died. This feeling is one also shared by Dia. For Elena, there is regret that she did not spend more time with her brother while he was alive. For Dia, a sense of "guilt" is almost implied in the intense inner conflict which emerges as she attempts to separate from her parents while realising the importance of her supportive role in the family. Similarly, Elena experiences some conflict and "guilt" for focusing on her own needs (being "selfish") as she tentatively moves into her own career. These different dimensions of "guilt" are apparent as the participants grope to express themselves and, as evidenced by the following quote from Dia's interview, they do not always feel entirely satisfied that they have adequately communicated the precise meaning of this emotion:

"But I really felt...if I ever felt in the least bit guilty, I felt guilty because it was not me [that died] ... I wouldn't say that I really felt guilty...how shall I describe it? But I know that I had such thoughts...['why her and not me?']..."

Significantly the Greek word for guilt, "enochos" ("ενοχος"), is defined as "held in", "liable *to*", "subject *to*" and the verb "enecho" ("ενεχω"), "to hold within"; (passive form) "to be held", "caught", "entangled in a thing" (Greek-English Lexicon, 1889/1961). In turn, "liable *to*", i.e. "legally bound",

"answerable for", "subject to penalty", "under obligation to do" (The Concise Oxford Dictionary), is derived from the French word, "lier", i.e. "to bind". These additional images reflect more fully the subtle nuances and the textural quality of the feelings of "guilt" or "conscience" of the participants. Implied in the passive form of "enochos" is the meaning of being an accessory to the wrong-doing. Members of a family feel "bound", "held in" by unwritten and unspoken rules to be there for each other. When a death occurs in the family, all experience a sense of personal responsibility, particularly if the loss was preventable. Faith and trust are values that are deeply embedded in families within most cultures: members of a family will be there for each other, are "answerable *for*", and "under obligation" *to* work towards, the good of the family, and care for each other (even if they do not always get on well with each other). When a family member dies, faith and trust are shaken, and every member of the family will experience a sense of "guilt"/responsibility to a greater or lesser extent.

This seems to concur with Levinas' (1979) concept of the "passivity of conscience", which is founded on the experience that the face of the Other calls my egoism into question (Kunz, 1998: 44). Faced with a crisis as a member of the family, we do not first think that we must help our mother/father/siblings. We simply do it. Our conscience is assigned to us simply by being a being that is vulnerable to be called, by being human: "To love is to fear for another; to come to the assistance of his frailty" (Levinas 1979: 256). In this respect, some of the participants become aware of having taken their sibling for granted, of neglecting to focus on their sibling and being more concerned with their own needs, with the self, and of getting on with their own lives and not recognising the significance of the other. When the sibling dies, there is a tremendous loss: an emptiness in self and world, and a gradual awakening of the meaning that the lost sibling had for one's life and for parents.

Another aspect of the "guilt" experienced by the participants is what existential philosophers refer to as "existential guilt", the guilt of not living up to one's potential or, as Yalom, 1980 (in Qualls, 1998: 354) posits, "[feeling] guilty to the extent that one has failed to fulfil authentic possibility". The findings of the present study seem to concur with the concept of existential guilt. With the loss, there is a continual call to respond to the needs of their parents, who are suffering, and an ongoing internal struggle and feelings of helplessness at not being able to reduce their pain. The inability to ease their parents' suffering becomes a transgression of self. Some experience existential guilt not only for the fact that their sibling had died at such a young age and had no possibility of fulfilling his or her own potential, but also for not fulfilling their own potential as surviving children. The perception of self as "survivor" is challenged daily as they witness their parents' grief and as they themselves struggle with the vicissitudes of life and their own human fallibility. They compare themselves to the deceased sibling, whose image has become frozen, and find themselves lacking. Dia, for example, questions the adequacy of her support of her mother following her father's death, and feels that possibly her sister would have provided better support because she was closer to her mother than Dia was.

Although not inevitable and not unique to sibling loss, survival guilt is more likely to be felt deeply with the loss of a sibling (or a "soul" brother or sister, a peer) than with other losses (e.g. loss of a parent or spouse). Because the sibling relationship is an egalitarian relationship - a relationship between peers - and because the survivor is one of "the children" and in some sense can fill in, substitute for the other, the question, "why her/him and not me?", is more likely to be asked. Significantly, in his comparative study of the loss of a sibling and the loss of a parent in childhood, Worden (1996: 119) found that "survivor guilt" is more likely to be a feature of sibling loss than of parental loss.

Participants become aware of "guilt" because of their tendency to focus on self and because of neglecting to appreciate the significance of their sibling. This awareness of focus on self, and of forgetfulness of the other as they get on with their own lives, brings to the foreground the need to care for the other. They think of their parents. Heidegger (1927/1962) speaks of conscience as "care"; care for the other. Faced by the death of their sibling, the participants' response is not to focus on self and on own needs. Where formerly they had taken the sibling for granted and had carried on with their own lives, suddenly everything changes. There is a desire to care for significant others because they "will not be there forever" (Elena). The greater sensitivity to, and heightened awareness of finitude, expressed by most of the participants, is not simply a matter of identification or empathy. It goes beyond empathy. For Heidegger (1927/1962), it is part of authentic being and an awareness of what really matters in life.

Buber's (1957) concept of "real" or "personal" guilt, adds a further dimension to "existential guilt." Conscience, according to Buber (1957: 120-121), is the capacity of man to distinguish between those of his actions, both past and future, that should be approved and those that should not be approved. In Buber's terms, conscience distinguishes and either confirms or condemns - actions and omissions to act, decisions and failures to decide, and even thoughts and wishes. Man alone is able to distance himself from himself and to reflect on his actions, decisions, thoughts and wishes. Buber notes that, while the context of conscience is in many respects determined by social and religious values, conscience itself is more than the internalisation of these values; it is more than Freud's concept of the "superego" and the internalisation of parents' and cultural values, demands and prohibitions. For Buber (1957: 121), the "shoulds" and "should nots" of society or of a particular faith determine only "the conceptions in the conscience", but not its existence itself. The type of guilt which Buber terms "existential guilt" is guilt that a person takes on himself or herself as a person and in a personal situation, and is grounded in the capacity to distance the self, to reflect and to distinguish - qualities that are essential to being human (1957: 121).

Significant in this respect is that the bereaved sibling encounters her guilt following the loss (i.e. in the absence of her sibling), as a survivor. According to Buber (1957: 120), guilt arises whenever "the human order of being is injured". Even though the bereaved sibling may not have been involved in the circumstances of the loss, and has not herself done anything to "injure the human order", the order has nevertheless been "injured" by the death of her sibling. Central to this "injury", for the bereaved sibling, is the break in the parent-child bond. It is in relation to their parents' intense suffering that some of the siblings feel most guilty. Cathy's guilt is compounded by her knowledge that her mother had lost her "favourite child". For Dia, the awareness that her sister's death had such a devastating impact on her parents and also affected other significant others, also evoked a lingering sense of existential guilt. For most of these participants, it seems that it is the *survival* itself that stood at the core of the inner conflict, anxiety and "guilt". This is cogently expressed by Dia:

"You know that I always said that I...And I definitely felt it...I honestly felt, 'Why not...why her and not me?' I mean, I was not in a relationship. I was not married. I was almost *disposable* at that stage...it wouldn't have been so bad for everybody..."

Significantly, it is also in relation to primary attachments (more specifically to mother) that attempts are initially made to restore the "human order" - where attempts are made to compensate for the deep wrench suffered by significant others.

Can one ease the existential guilt that some of these surviving siblings are still facing in their lives? According to Buber (1957: 122), "illuminating" (facing) the guilt and its meaning for one's life, rather than silencing it, creates the possibility of reconciling the guilt through a newly acquired authentic relationship to the world and others, in which the individual's best qualities can unfold. Stated differently, confronting one's existential guilt transforms it from a limitation into a strong basis for inter-human living, of concern for others, because, as Buber (1957: 122) has it, "the wounds of the order-of-being can be healed in infinitely many other places than those at which they were inflicted". The "confession", he says, "is the door springing open" (1957:126). Only then can the person realise his or her highest potential. Truth is freedom (Heidegger, 1927/1962).

It is significant that Cathy held on to her secret guilt. For a long time she could not share this with anybody. It was only much later when she went for counselling that she was able fully to confront her guilt and attempt to understand its essence and meaning for her life. Although she still carries a lot of guilt about her brother having been in the car and has not been able to share this with her mother, she has integrated her loss experience to a certain extent through her empathic understanding of the pain and confusion of bereaved children. Realising how traumatic a family loss can be, and recognising the value of support outside the immediate family, she remains devoted to the world of bereaved children and has provided relief for many.

But what if her parents had revealed the truth about previous losses in the family and/or if she had been informed about how profoundly parents are affected by the loss of a child: that her mother's anger and alienating resentment had been part of her intense pain and grief? Would this knowledge have made a difference? While Cathy may not necessarily have felt less guilty about her involvement in the circumstances of her brother's death, she is of the opinion that if her parents (particularly her mother) had been counselled after the first loss and if she, Cathy, had also received support relating to her mother's behaviour, that this could have changed the whole story of her life. Several researchers and writers (Krell & Rabkin, 1979; Cain *et al.*, 1964; Rosen, 1984-85; 1986; Davies, 1999) agree that the way parents and other significant others respond to the surviving sibling's hurt contributes to the degree to which a bereaved brother or sister is able to sort out his/her involvement in the loss. This seems to be as true of sibling loss in young adulthood as of childhood bereavement.

In his developmental theory, Winnicott (1958a/1990) makes thematic the close relationship between guilt and the capacity for concern. He states that "... the sense of guilt is very little more than *anxiety with a special quality*, anxiety felt because of the conflict between love and hate..." (1958a: 16). Thus, according to Winnicott (1963/1990: 73), guilt-sense implies tolerance of ambivalence. He places ambivalence in a central position in the individual's development of the "capacity for concern" (1963/1990: 73). Thus, guilt sense implies tolerance of ambivalence, which in turn implies a considerable degree of psychological growth and health, and a capacity for concern. "Concern refers to the fact that the individual *cares*, or *minds*, and both feels and accepts responsibility" (1963/1990: 73). It may therefore be said that guilt-sense fosters empathy, and concern implies a sense of responsibility and respect for relationships. The concern and sense of responsibility was experienced deeply by most of the participants, who felt compassion for their parents in the loss situation. "Guilt" is the ready-at-hand word we use even when we do not intend any negative connotation. Viewed from Winnicott's (1958a/1990, 1963/1990) perspective, namely that guilt is sometimes on the way to concern, we become aware of the positive aspect of this emotion. We see, too, that it is close to Heidegger's (1927/1962) *Fursorge* (Care), Buber's (1957) "personal" or existential guilt, and Levinas' (1979) "passivity of conscience" or "love" and responsibility.

7.1.8 The Trapped Position of the "Involved-Outsider"

This study found that the experience of sibling loss is an experience of being an "involved-outsider". Initially there is a feeling of distancing, of being outside the grief situation. While the sense of distance from the world and others is part of the normal grief response to the loss of any significant other, what is unique to sibling loss is the feeling of being a-part-of, yet also apart-from, the grief situation. This persists for a long time and should not be confused with the initial sense of distancing and unreality. This is evidenced in all the protocols as the participants, confronted by the pain of their

own loss, their parents' anguish and intense suffering, and the sorrow of other significant others in the life of their deceased sibling, find themselves without a place to grieve.

In her comprehensive study of childhood sibling loss, Davies (1999: 199-201) found that the long-term effects of sibling bereavement in childhood brought to light additional responses, one of which, "I don't belong", arises in part from the changes in the family following a loss. Davies notes that with the disruption of tasks and activities of daily living, the heaviness of emotion in the home, and the reorganisation of roles, children begin to feel that they are not part of what is happening and as if they "don't belong" in their family; they feel that there is no place for them.

These findings resonate with the present study and suggest that the feeling of "not belonging" as described by Davies (1999) is also experienced by siblings who lose their brothers or sisters in young adulthood, although this is manifested somewhat differently. It would appear from the present findings that it is more than "not belonging". It is, as has been stated, paradoxically a feeling of being very much *a-part-of* but also *apart-from* the grief situation. As young adults, most of the participants in this study were actively involved in supporting their parents through the loss; they cognitively understood what was happening, and some were initially surrounded by people; yet, like their childhood counterparts, they felt very separate and alone in their grief.

The feeling of being a-part-of yet also apart-from the grief situation is encountered on three levels: the individual, the familial and the social/relational; all of these are interrelated but have been separated here for the purpose of the discussion.

On the *self*-side, the pain of the loss alone, the loss of someone who has been part of the surviving sibling's world since childhood, her "other self", someone who lived through her adolescence with her and could have assisted her in breaking away from parents, initially creates a distance between the surviving sibling and the world of others, and paradoxically removes her from her lived-world. The isolating effect of loss is almost tangible. Not only is she unable to be with others in the same way as before, but those around her also change and treat her differently. Before the death, the participants were part-of but also apart-from their sibling, part-of and also apart-from their parents, but, with the loss, everything is a-part. The sense of related-separateness that is so essential as they ready themselves to meet the challenge of "intimacy" (Erikson, 1959/1980; 1968/1971) with others outside the family, is shattered, and they are confronted by the developmental crisis of "isolation".

Burying a brother or a sister at any age can be a very lonely experience, but the loss of a sibling in young adulthood, a time when the participants experienced themselves more as part of the (lateral) brother/sister relationship than of the (vertical) parent-child relationship, also contributes to the

feeling of being an "outsider". Within the sibling "underworld" as Bank and Kahn (1982) refer to the sibling sub-group, the participants shared experiences, ideas and concerns that were not always shared with parents; they assisted and affirmed each other in many ways and had a place and a role that was unique to the sibling relationship and defined who they were. With the loss of this significant relationship, the participants lose a unique recipient of many different emotions. In an attempt to work through the loss - to make sense of it - memories of their deceased sibling's life, rather than visiting his or her grave, are important to most of the participants. The different way that the participants deal with the loss also separates them from the world of others and from their parents.

On the *family*-side, being an "outsider" is encountered by some participants through the lack of acknowledgement of their grief. For others it is the different way in which the siblings cope with the loss that separates them from their parents. Cathy felt like an "outsider" through a history of experiencing herself as the less favoured or "outside" child in relation to her deceased brother, by her personal guilt, as well as by a feeling of being excluded from the family grief. For Dia, the sense of apartness is based on an inability to share her deeper feelings for fear of breaking down. Initially the experience is one of not being part-of (Cathy) or, as in Dia's situation, not *wanting* to be a-part-of, the family grief. This realisation is encountered not only through the participants' evasion of the pain of the loss, but also through the awareness of their parents' profound grief. The bereaved siblings' perception that the loss of a child is the most devastating of all losses, and that they cannot possibly know the depth of their parents' profound anguish, overshadows their own grief and also sets them apart. They begin to feel like an "insider" that is "outside" the grief situation.

Thus, while the surviving sibling is very much part of the grieving family, she feels separate and apart from it - a participant-observer. The underlying feeling of apartness and alienation is co-constituted by an awareness of their parents' deep grief and total transformation, their inability to be available to the surviving sibling in the same way as before, and by the change in communicational value within the family. The discomfort of either the one or both parents in talking about the death and loss, also sets them apart from their parents. Significant in this respect is that, in contrast to parents (particularly the mother) who visited the grave religiously and found solace in this ritual, all of the young adult participants resisted going to the cemetery. The study reveals that for the participants other "rituals" were more meaningful, i.e. through remembering the sibling as he or she was in life (Dia and Elena) and the sharing of stories of the deceased sibling (Elena). Elena felt strongly that remembering her brother's death should not outweigh the significance of his life and the legacy that he had left her. Unfortunately, when others were unable to speak about her brother without being overcome with the tragedy of his death, this increased her alienation and distanced her further from the world of others.

On the *social/relational*-side, the feeling of loneliness and apartness, of being an “outsider”, is strengthened by the responses (“Have your parents got over the loss of your brother?”) or lack of responses of others (silence about the loss or avoidance of the bereaved). This creates a distance between the surviving sibling and her world and in many ways it is as if the participants are expelled from the world along with their deceased sibling. While it is very difficult when one loses a spouse, a child, or a parent, for others not to notice and to acknowledge the significance of the loss for the survivor, in the case of sibling loss, it is possible to slip into, or be placed in, the background and hide one's grief. The relational complexity of the situation is amplified when the deceased brother or sister also leaves behind a husband, lover and/or child, so that for the surviving sibling a question arising may be “who owns the loss?” or even, as in Cathy's situation, “Am I allowed to be sorrowful?”

The participants' own concern, and the natural concern of others, with the parents' grief, as well as their own inability to share their pain with anybody, make this a profoundly lonely experience. It is the experience of being an involved-outsider, a “stranger-onlooker” who is, nevertheless, caught right in the middle of all the grief situations.

Alapack's (2004) notion of the “implicated alien”, i.e. one who is central to the deceased but who, after the loss, is overlooked, ignored or stays on the “outside” and remains invisible, unnoticed and alienated, more aptly describes the loss experience of the bereaved young adult sibling. Whether it is the sibling herself who withdraws in an attempt to find a safe space to mourn, or family members and others who, in the emotional turmoil following the loss of a child, forget about or do not know what to say to the bereaved sibling, all the participants experienced themselves as “implicated aliens.” In the present study, while Dia and Elena felt more comfortable with (and Dia even welcomed) the apartness and aloneness/solitude as an opportunity to deal with their loss on their own and in their own time, and Cathy felt excluded from the family grief and ached for some validation that she was also grieving; implicitly they all needed acknowledgement that they too had suffered a significant loss.

7.1.9 The Silent and Lonely Journey.

The feeling of being apart-from the grief situation is accentuated by the silence surrounding death and loss. Confronted by the devastating experience of the loss of their sibling, the participants have no words that can adequately describe the maelstrom of emotions that threatens to overwhelm them. Initially, silence emerges as a natural response to the overwhelming and confusing emotions experienced immediately following the awareness that a significant other has been irretrievably lost.

Later, the silence is perpetuated by the participants' acute awareness of the grief of their parents and of other significant others. The power of silence is evident in the present study but the power of words

within a grieving family can have equally powerful and sometimes damaging consequences. As evidenced by Cathy:

"... and she (i.e. mother) said, 'I just want to tell you my *favourite* child died!' (very emotional and unable to continue) I think it was devastating ... it was hurtful ...for many years I thought I had no worth."

Apart from the fear of burdening their parents with more pain, participants become increasingly aware that breaking the silence may expose the intense emotions associated with mourning. A tacit understanding develops to maintain the silence. Within the family, silence becomes the solution to further fragmentation by protecting each other and themselves from painful emotions. While some members of the family may wish to talk about the loss and to express their feelings, others resist any communication, and the silence is protracted. Concealment of emotions and a refusal or inability to talk about the loss freeze the mourning process in its earliest stages and allow minimal opportunity for healing to take place. The silence is enhanced by the participants' perception that others are uncomfortable in being with the bereaved - they are also hurting (Elena); they have other priorities (Dia); or they simply cannot cope with the family grief and so avoid contact (Cathy).

Whether it is the survivor herself who is unable to talk (for fear of breaking down or of exposing her secret guilt), or one or both parents that prefer to deal with their grief privately, or her friends who become "embarrassed", the fact is that, for all participants, a protracted silence prevails. The bereaved sibling then, as well as suffering the pain of loss, experiences a denial of the full meaning of this pain and the opportunity to share her feelings or concerns with others. The participants' experience of the loss of their brother or sister becomes a silent and lonely journey. Although some of the participants in the present study had spoken briefly *about* their sibling with a close friend shortly after the death, none of them had discussed or shared their *feelings* with parents or friends, even after many years following the death.

Most grief theorists stress the importance of talking, sharing and recalling in the healing process. As Stated by Weizman and Kamm (1985: 186): "It is not the passage of time itself that is healing. It is the *expression* of grief over a period of time that leads to the healing of painful memories." The importance of articulating felt or pre-reflective knowledge is generally emphasised by phenomenologists, who concur with Gendlin (1988: 52) that "to articulate is to live further". The power of language to transform painful emotions is evident in psychotherapy. Something like the "working through" that occurs in therapy can occur in everyday life. Yet, silence frequently surrounds sibling loss. In our Western world, the absence of cultural prescriptions regarding loss and mourning also plays a role in terms of how the grief is dealt with (Gorer, 1965/1987, 1973).

Several researchers (Cain *et al.*, 1964; Krell & Rabkin, 1979; Rosen, 1984-85; Lukas & Seiden, 1987/1990) have discussed the nature of the silence in families surrounding death and loss, and its powerful consequences. The concept of a "conspiracy of silence" or "the bargain of silence" (Lukas & Seiden, 1987/1990) following a loss within a family seems to concur with the findings of this study. For all participants, it is apparent that silence does not emerge out of the world alone or out of the self alone; it emerges out of a dialogue between the two. Like the musical chord referred to earlier, the thematic link of parents' grief and siblings' grief blend, and harmony is restored ... supposedly. By maintaining the silence, parents/others/siblings are not burdened with emotions that may overwhelm. On the surface, life can continue as "normal". However, by remaining silent, by assuming the position of silent conspirator, the bereaved sibling cannot do the "work" of mourning necessary for healing to take place.

In the present study, the participants manifest some ambivalence about the silence. On the one hand, there is the relief brought about by an avoidance of communication that initially helps to contain and conceal emotions; on the other hand, and over time, there is a nagging sense of being excluded and not being noticed that subtly (and sometimes, very pointedly) devalues the bereaved sibling. Significantly, silence conceals and reveals. In fact, Alapack (1987: 7) points out that "inauthentic silence roars". This is clearly demonstrated in Cathy's situation where her mother's silence is experienced as an accusation feeding Cathy's personal guilt. Holding on to her guilt, Cathy is left feeling totally worthless. For Dia, however, who wanted to deal with her grief privately, maintaining the silence was important and having time alone aided her in making sense of her loss and incorporating the loss into her life in a personal and intentional way.

Still the question of why the bereaved sibling maintains the silence is far from settled. Certainly protection of and being strong for parents are important aspects of the silence. In the present study, the protection of self also emerged as significant, as did the reality that different members in the family deal with the loss differently and that the bereaved sibling frequently finds herself torn between the parents. By aligning herself with one parent, the bereaved sibling may feel that she is betraying the other.

From the present study, additional possibilities for the bereaved sibling's silence also emerged as significant factors: *firstly*, the need to retain the attachment to the lost brother or sister; and, *secondly*, a state of emotional readiness to deal with the loss openly.

In the process of grief, the participants revealed a need to retain the attachment to their deceased sibling. Kierkegaard (1843/1959b: 176) posits that "[s]orrow is always seeking its object". Holding on to lived memories of the deceased sibling (Dia and Elena), taking over roles that he or she filled,

even speaking with the same voice inflection (Elena), represent the "seeking" of which Kierkegaard speaks and what Bowlby (1980) and Parkes (1972/1975) refer to as "searching" for, and finding, the lost loved one. In the days, weeks, months and even years after the loss, the bereaved sibling longs for the deceased brother or sister. The anguish, although not constantly or acutely present, is quite specific. Only the presence of *that* unique person can make things better. Thus, a possible understanding of the bereaved sibling's silence, also related to the need to retain the attachment to their brother or sister, is that they somehow ally themselves with the deceased sibling, who, after all, is also silent. Because the sibling is no longer physically present, the dialogue becomes a silent one. In some instances, the silence is also based on a need to protect their deceased sibling's memory. This was evidenced in the preliminary study where Angie perceived others outside the family as simply "curious" about her sister's death and she angrily refused to allow certain peers even to attend her sister's funeral.

The sense of having a "*conversation cut off in the middle*" (Lukas & Seiden, 1987/1990: 138) is very strong after a sudden death and is particularly true of siblings whose ongoing dialogue, not only in the present but also in the future, is abruptly severed. Because of the intimate nature of the sibling relationship, the varied experiences that are not always shared with parents or others, and the personal memories built up over a long period, it is not surprising that initially some siblings are not able to talk about the loss. Silence provides an escape from painful, disruptive emotions and maintains a sense of stability. However, feelings that are kept in the dark fester and grow and a kind word, an acknowledgement that they too have suffered a loss, can make the world of difference to a bereaved sibling. Lifting the silence, being able to talk about death, can provide relief from confusion, guilt and depression.

For most of the participants in this study, a state of emotional *readiness* also seemed to be essential to speaking about the loss and openly expressing their grief. Contingent on this is being able to find a safe space to mourn, and an authentic listener with whom the surviving sibling can share deeper emotions without feeling threatened that the person will insist that she reveal more. Significantly in this study, it was many years after the loss that Cathy and Dia were able to break through the silence and alienation and allow their grief to move outward. All the participants describe their encounter with a trusted and significant other, someone outside the immediate family grief (a counsellor, spouse, extended family), as central to their readiness to let go and openly to grieve over their brother or sister.

7.1.10 Resolution

The study reveals that all the participants had reached some resolution of their grief - by the time of the interviews. However, Elena is still in the early stages of her grief and continues to resist the

changes wrought by the loss, holding on to an idealised image of her brother. For Cathy and Dia, despite a thirty-year-plus time lapse since their loss, the journey is ongoing and although the acute grief is not constantly present, the trauma of the loss still bursts forth at times with all the force experienced at the moment of receiving the news of their sibling's death. For the bereaved sibling, resolution of the grief is neither simple, straightforward nor time-limited, not only because it is difficult to accept the death of a young person, someone who was deeply embedded in her life and who she assumed would be there in the future, but also because of the unabated grief of significant others (particularly the parents) and the loss of the family as she had known it.

Does this, however, mean that the bereaved sibling's loss remains "unresolved"? What does "resolution" mean? Is grief over the loss of a sibling, or any other significant other for that matter, ever fully "resolved?" These are some of the questions that arose from the present study.

In terms of the existing psychological understandings of loss and mourning, different theorists have taken up different positions regarding the "successful" resolution of grief work: the severance of ties to the deceased (Freud, 1917/1957); "emancipation from the bondage to the deceased" (Lindemann, 1944); detachment and readjustment to life without the deceased (Bowlby, 1980); adaptation to crisis and social role transition (Parkes, 1972/1975). Other theorists (Silverman *et al.*, 1995) consider maintaining contact with the deceased as significant to the resolution of grief work. In Kleinian (object-relations) terms, resolution involves restoring the lost loved person inside oneself and in-so-doing realising that in essence one's relationship cannot be taken from one; he or she is within, and part of one. These perceptions of the resolution of sibling loss focus primarily on loss as an individual matter and do not take into account the individual's social/relational world.

While it is natural for us to want to maintain a connection with ("hold on to") our lost loved one, and while it is also important to "let go" of him or her in the sense that he or she does not fill our minds every minute of the day and night, in this study it would appear that the "resolution" of the grief for the bereaved sibling is neither an absolute "letting go" nor a persistent "holding on", but rather a "letting be"- not in the sense of resignation, a hopeless "giving up" (Kubler-Ross, 1969/1985: 99-100), a succumbing to what is too painful or too hard to bear, but through "acceptance." Although Kubler-Ross is referring to the dying person who finally ceases to struggle against death, confronts the reality of his or her pain and is able to sorrow his or her losses (both past and future), her description resonates with the findings of this study. At some point following their sibling's death, most of the participants cease struggling against the pain and submit to their grief.

Kierkegaard (1847/1962) reveals the helpful significance of our agony. He encourages us to dwell with our anxiety and to sorrow through our suffered losses. Sorrow-ing, he maintains, is the only deep

"cure" for depression and despair. We must not be allowed to harden ourselves out of the pain of life. Rather than holding the pain at bay, we allow the grief to be felt and expressed. In his "Works of Love", Kierkegaard (1847/1962) counsels that suffering must be suffered. Sorrow is essential, because coherently and healthily, it "springs the trap on distorted memories" (Alapack, 1999:103). Remembering and remembering fully and correctly is essential for grief to run its course. Sorrow breaks through the deception and self-deception, and allows grief to run its course. Sorrow, according to Kierkegaard, is only truly surmounted insofar as it endures its own truth. We do not overcome our sorrow. Getting over the sorrow, surmounting it, means that we dwell enduringly, or that we abide by the truth that it discloses. As noted above, this is something different to a resignation that is a capitulation, an act of weakness, a "giving up". Genuine or authentic resignation ("letting-be") is the deepening that Alapack (1995: 10) refers to as "restorative surmounting" (Heidegger's term). When we confront the truth that is concealed and protected in our sorrow, a "restoring surmounting" takes place. Alapack (1995) refers to that endurance as a "restoration" rather than a healing.

In Kierkegaard we find that the "work" of mourning completes itself with the spiritual act of concern and forgiveness. For Kierkegaard, *forgiveness*, i.e. letting go of the need to judge or blame the self and/or others, is the ultimate resolution of the loss of a loved one. The authentic resolution to grief work is the acceptance of the loved other as fallible and flawed. Forgiveness opens the door to atonement, to making reparation. The capacity to forgive the imperfect other enables us to accept and forgive our own imperfections, our real or merely imagined crimes. We receive and we give (forgiveness) even though we may not condone or approve of our actions or of those of the other. We realise that love cannot be perfect and that even though we may not deserve it, we are still loved. It is ours by gift, by grace.

Melanie Klein (1940) richly describes the need for, and the struggle to make "reparation" for acts and wishes of greed, envy, jealousy and aggression against an other. In speaking about "reparation", she is in fact also talking about forgiveness and stresses its significance in the work of mourning. For Klein (1940: 162), it is a matter of the mourner gradually regaining trust in external objects and values of various kinds, that he or she is able once more to strengthen his or her confidence in the lost loved person: "Then he can again bear to realise that this object was not perfect, and yet not lose trust and love for him, nor fear his revenge". When this stage is reached, important steps in the work of mourning are made: "As security in the inner world is gradually regained through forgiveness, and feelings and inner objects are allowed to come more to life again, re-creative processes can set in and hope return" (Klein, 1940: 163). Others within the British School of Psychoanalysis (or Object-Relations Theorists): D. W. Winnicott, Ronald Fairbairn and Harry Guntrip, also contribute rich insights into concern or making reparation. Indeed, Elkin (1972: 408) posits that Klein and Winnicott together resolve the "depressive position" by what is essentially "a mental-spiritual" achievement -

Klein through her concept of "reparation for guilt"; Winnicott through his concept of the development of the "capacity for concern". These concepts, and Kierkegaard's emphasis on "forgiveness", provide the bridge to where Freud peters out at the end of 1917.

Pertinent to the findings of this study, forgiveness involved not only self-forgiveness but also forgiving parents for their way of dealing with the loss, which added to the participants' own pain and held them hostage. For some participants, the aspect of "forgiveness" was evident from fairly early on in the grief process. For example, in speaking about the marked changes in her parents and her resistance to these changes, Elena recognises that death happens and that nobody can be blamed for it. The loss of a child is devastating and parents cannot be blamed for being changed by the death. Similarly, while Dia may have felt irritated and even angry at times by her parents' expectations that she cope with the loss in the same way as they did, by their lack of insight into her needs, and by their tendency to cling to her, she accepts that the grief of a parent is severe and she understands their fears of yet another separation. She is able to forgive them for holding on to her and later is able to give herself permission to move on with her own life. Even though Cathy retains anger towards her mother, whose despair over the loss of three children and angry verbal attacks on Cathy left her feeling as if she had no worth and amplified the pain of her loss, she too is finally able to move towards forgiveness, albeit hesitantly, as evidenced by the following:

"...and looking back, I realise that it was emotional instability...I mean, you lose 3 children, you can't be absolutely normal, can you? I don't think so ... and I experienced it. You cannot..."

For the participants, letting go of negative feelings (anger, guilt and blame) and transforming these to acceptance, love/compassion and forgiveness, meant finding some resolution. Letting go of the negativity is liberating. It allows for reintegration, for reclaiming the self, and enables the bereaved siblings to resolve their grief sufficiently to be able to move on with their own lives.

The present study reveals that, with time, forgiveness is made possible in the revelation and acknowledgement of truth. For example, when the truth was revealed about the multiple losses suffered by her parents, Cathy was able to let go of the hurt in the relationship with her mother, recover a sense of self worth, and move on. Although she continues to struggle with guilt feelings in relation to her brother's death, and retains some anger towards her mother for her insensitive behaviour towards her, she realises that she has to let go of this as well. For Dia acknowledging and letting go of her anger in the relationship with God brought tremendous relief, and she was able to find new meaning and hope for the future through her strengthened faith. In another instance, when Dia let go of the negative (painful) meaning that she attached to the loss (all the shattered lives that it

left in its wake), she found new meaning (i.e. her sister would not have coped well with all the hardships of life) that enabled her to move on.

The realisation that everything is not under one's control - that we must live without necessarily having the answers - facilitates the development of humility and a different relatedness to life: one of wanting to be of help to others. Levinas (1988: 159) sees this as the one meaning inherent in suffering: "Suffering is useless", he says; only in the sense that I can be of help to the Other, does suffering make sense. The liberating message lingers in Kierkegaard's, 1996 (in Alapack, 2000: 5) judgement on himself: "I have loved the world because I love it through my melancholy."

This altered relatedness to life, has relevance for the present study. In "letting-be" (i.e. authentic resignation), the participants' anxiety about death coexists with a renewed appreciation of significant relationships and a desire to nurture these. The heightened awareness of unpredictable mortal existence shatters the assumption of enduring contact, but also leads to personal growth and a transcendence of self through reflection and a re-examination of their own lives, personal beliefs and values. The significance and flawed fragility of their family is brought home to them. It brings the appreciation of relationships with others outside the realm of family sorrow (friends and other significant others). This is clearly evident in the present study and also in the preliminary study. For Elena, the awareness that death can come at any time, that it is not something that happens only to the elderly and the very ill, and her fear of death, are accompanied by a deeper appreciation of others and an awareness that time spent with significant others is valuable, that every moment counts. For some, the loss also brings into focus other important aspects of life, including compassion for those that are suffering - a compassion not shadowed by guilt. Dwelling with her own loss experience, Cathy has become very aware of how traumatic loss can be, and she has developed a deep compassion for others (particularly children) who suffer loss.

Kubler-Ross (1969/1985: 100) cautions, however, that acceptance ("letting-be") should not be mistaken for a "happy state". Although the intense emotional struggle may be over for the bereaved sibling, the sadness lingers. The future will come without the physical presence of the deceased brother or sister. While the bereaved sibling feels the intensity of the loss and knows that there is nothing to do but live through the death, she cannot fully accept this knowledge. As the bereaved sibling moves through life, there is always another situation that reveals another of the meanings of this loss. She must live with the unknowable aspects of her sibling's life and death, and his or her interrupted future. She must live with her thoughts of what might have been. Moreover, she must live with the existential incompleteness in her family of origin. The comfort is seeing her parents recovering part of their former selves again, and the perpetual presence of the sibling as constantly present in absence; spiritually present as the participant moves through the various transitional phases

in her life. For some, there is also the hope of a possible reunion in the hereafter. Elena's longing for her deceased brother is poignant: "I don't know if you ever meet again as souls...but if you do...gee I'd be the happiest chappie!".

Like Freud, Kierkegaard stresses that sorrowing/mourning takes a long time and that it is a "work", a labour. It does not come from short-term therapy as suggested by Lindemann (1944). Sorrowing is not a time-limited process. It involves "hard work done at the razor's edge" (Alapack, 2000: 5). This study concurs with the spirit of Kierkegaard's description of sorrow and its resolution. The findings of the study reveal that seeking "closure" or absolute resolution is an illusion. Resolution is never final but only sufficiently adequate to provide the capacity to meet with fresh challenges, and to allow for the evolvment of a more authentic self and a deepening of our relationships with others. Sorrow is never completed.

7.2 The Gestalt of Sibling Loss

"I thought I could describe a state; make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process. It needs not a map but a history" (Lewis, 1976: 68).

Although Lewis was describing his anguish at the loss of his wife to cancer, his description of grief resonates with the findings of this study. In order to understand the process of loss, we need not "a map but a *history*" (my emphasis). This is particularly true of the loss of a brother or sister in young adulthood. It takes a whole past to build up a relationship with a sibling, and the loss of that relationship also seems to have reverberations that echo throughout the life of the surviving sibling and beyond; it impacts even on future generations. In the survivor's transitions through time and in the context of life changes, the pain of the loss can emerge as powerfully as if it "has just happened." This does not necessarily mean that the bereavement of a sibling is a lifelong victimisation from which there is no resolution, but rather highlights the infiniteness of the sibling bond and the many meanings that such a loss has for the survivor, one of which is the shared parents.

The loss of a brother or sister is an experience that many of us will encounter at some stage in our lives. It is a loss of a significant other, and, as such, all the emotions associated with normal grief are experienced and demand radical mourning, reorganisation and reintegration. Although there is no quintessential sibling survivor's story because there is no quintessential survivor, the present study reveals both what the experience is like for the individual and what this implies about sibling loss on a general level.

From the analysis of the data, the following gestalt of this unique loss experience emerges and distinguishes it from the loss of other significant others:

The *gestalt* of sibling loss is layered grief. First and foremost in meaning is the loss-in-the-family. Clearly the individual suffers a loss of an intimate, complex and long-time connection, her brother or sister. Thus, in one sense, the bereaved sibling must pass through the work of mourning as any loss demands. However, the primary *gestalt* still is the loss of the family unit. The family is irrevocably changed. That is the largest loop. The dominant coil within that whole spiral is the parents' grief. An unimaginable cruelty has been visited upon them: they have outlived their child. The whole spiral of life is distorted. The chant of protest re-echoes: "It's not supposed to be that way!"

For the surviving sibling, therefore, it is in effect more than a double loss (as has been stated in the previous section); it is a triple loss. Not only does she lose her sibling, she also loses her family unit, her "holding" place. Then, too, that which is not immediately apparent but which soon reveals itself, she loses her parents in the old familiar way. In some deeply significant way, psychically they die with the death of their child. The surviving sibling watches them flounder, sees the different and often opposite ways in which each parent copes with the trauma. Their pain is palpable. Like a heavy mantle, the bereaved sibling wears the responsibility of coaxing them back to a world of new beginnings, back to life. In the process, she falls hostage to their grief.

Paradoxically, she is both intimately *a-part-of* and strangely *apart-from* her grieving family. She is an "involved-outsider". "Involved" in so far as her grief is immense for both her lost sibling and her distressed parents; and an "outsider" because her grief is postponed. She freezes her pain in order to sustain her parents. Moreover, others in her web of relationships also freeze her out.

Her existence is relegated to that of an implicated alien, central to the psychological stability of the family in its loss, but overlooked, taken-for-granted and ignored. In that existential position, the usual, normal and the necessary do not happen. Grief, which is a process, is not expressed; mourning, which is a "work", is held in abeyance; sorrowing, which perforce must be passionate, is muted. And, all the while the "waves" of grief rush and undulate, relentlessly. Meanwhile her time rightfully to come to terms with *her* loss seems to be permanently postponed. It will come as a grace when finally her enclosing reserve opens, the truth breaks through the silence, and her grief is overtly expressed. This is the existential thaw that starts the healing.

From the present study, it is clear that the experience of sibling loss cannot be understood in stasis or in terms of individual or time-limited responses to the death. This profound and long-lasting experience also cannot be understood apart from the context in which it occurs. The following section will deal briefly with the contribution of the study to the picture of sibling grief and the implications for support and psychotherapy.

7.3 The Pattern of Sibling Grief

Loss presupposes an attachment. There can be no grief without an attachment. The predicament of the bereaved sibling, a vulnerable attached human who misses her deceased brother or sister, fits well with the pattern of "normal" grieving and supports aspects of previous bereavement theories.

However, it also *qualifies* the traditional picture. The loss of a sibling reveals a different texture and quality not adequately conceptualised in the literature. The distinguishing mark of sibling loss is its radically relational nature. Occurring within the crucible of the family, it echoes and reverberates into the lives of all other members. Yet, paradoxically, the pain of those others overshadow the concerns of the bereaved sibling, eclipses her grief so that it becomes imperceptible, almost invisible.

Salient is the dialectical relationship between the grief of the bereaved sibling, the parents' immense pain, and the social acknowledgement (or lack thereof) of the sibling's sorrow. It is impossible to discuss meaningfully or to comprehend sibling grief without explicating this co-constituting dialectic. Throughout the experience we see the inter-penetration of these three dispositions: the individual, the family and the social other.

Keen sensitivity to the sibling's plight provides a new way of looking at grief *per se*. It is always a family matter, much more so than the still-too-individualistic bereavement literature acknowledges. The sibling in mourning, however, is unique in the way she must cope with personal grief, her parents' loss of their child, the sadness of other remaining siblings, the deceased sibling's friends, and/or his or her spouse and children. The overarching message is that in grief meanings flow into each other. The loss of the deceased affects each individual uniquely. However, the grief reaction of each individual shapes and is shaped by the grief of significant others, and is co-shaped by the nature of the relationship each had had with the deceased. To be a surviving sibling is to be placed uniquely at the nexus of all these overlapping and criss-crossing emotional currents. It is a unique burden.

The idea that sibling loss cannot be understood apart from the context in which it occurs has been adumbrated, even accented, by other research workers (Cain *et al.*, 1964; Krell & Rabkin, 1979, Rosen, 1984-85, 1986; Davies, 1999; Mahon & Page, 1995). The focus of these studies, however, is on the loss of a brother or sister during childhood and/or adolescence. The present study extends this finding into young adulthood. Moreover, at this stage, sibling grief most vividly shows itself to be not static but a moving, fluctuating and evolving process. Different emotions emerge, not as stages or phases, but rather as parts of the whole; they manifest different meanings at different places within the unfolding process of the loss. For example, the emotion of fear is initially present in the bereaved sibling's personal confrontation with loss: the void or nothingness created by the absence of his or her brother or sister and with the heightened awareness of finitude. But it is also present in relation to the parents as bereaved siblings witness their parents' relentless grief and perceived deterioration. For

some, fear is present in the form of a sense of responsibility for not having taken better care of their sibling and later, the fear is associated with the possibility of existential loneliness that looms in a future without the deceased brother or sister.

Pertinent to the way that sibling grief unfolds is the presence of the structure of her parents' grief. Evolving events present critical periods and bring about specifically ambiguous and defensive-supportive-alienating positions that can easily be misunderstood by others. The bereaved sibling may then become the casualty of others' over-concern with the parents' loss. Understanding the unfolding story of these critical moments has rich implications for support, for psychotherapy and for bereavement counselling.

In terms of conceptualising the complex and layered process of the grief of siblings, one may more appropriately speak of "waves" (Klein, 1940). The experience is not linear but cyclical or undulating in nature. Emotions are experienced with varied intensity, interchanging from moment to moment, hour to hour, day to day. Their variation is wide and their potency can be frightening. Resistance to the painful and untenable truth can be strong.

Grief is rightly seen as a process; mourning as a "labour". To capture the particular texture of sibling grief, its impact and power, I use the image of wave upon wave undulating and breaking. Carefully considered, neither Freud (1917), nor Kubler-Ross (1969/1985) mean that there are linear stages and phases to grieving. What these seminal thinkers tell us is that moments emerge, then stumble into one another and collide. The wave hits, recedes and then returns. Cathy describes this aptly as a "whirlpool" with different emotions surfacing and then disappearing again only to resurface later. The message I wish to communicate is that we ought not to try to harness the ocean of grief, confine it, make it time-lined and measurable, but attend to its maverick nature even as we try to come to grips with it; to understand and grasp its sense.

The following section will discuss the meaning of these waves and show how the different dimensions: sibling; parents; and the social other, impact on the bereaved sibling's grief. Implications for support during the various waves will also be discussed briefly.

- **Consciousness of the loss of the bond to the deceased sibling**

In terms of Freud's (1917) explication of the grief process, *attachment* to the lost "object" must become *hyper-invested* in service of *detaching* so that we might *re-bond*. It is a story of links, broken links and re-linking. This description of the grief process closely approximates the metaphor of waves coming and going, each different yet related: the flow of consciousness of the loss of the bond/attachment, the hyper-investment and hyper-bonding concerning it, and the de-linking in service

of re-bonding. With the loss of a sibling though, the flow of consciousness also involves the awareness of the loss of the parent-child bond, the hyper-attachment, and detachment from parents as well.

The first wave involves the bereaved sibling's awareness of the loss of the bond to the deceased brother or sister. Apart from the parent-child bond, the sibling relationship is one of the most taken-for-granted relationships that we will ever have. Awareness of the significance of this bond is not consistently present to our consciousness. We do not always appreciate the significance, or the *meaning-to-our-self*, of a brother or sister. Paradoxically we see it more fully only when it is cut asunder and no longer exists. Death drives home the reality of this bond. With the moment of knowing, comes grief. Grief is the reaction to loss. More precisely, "it is the *natural spontaneous psychological response to the loss of the loss*" (Alapack, 2006). In other words, as soon as we realise that this bond is irretrievably lost, we experience the pain of grief. The loss transforms our world. The loss can also be devastating because it alters our sense of self and identity. Whatever meaning the deceased sibling took with him or her, that part of self is felt to be missing.

With the news of the death, bereaved siblings experience a wave of overwhelming shock, disbelief, numbness and unreality. Their brother or sister is dead. Almost immediately the awareness of the significance of the parents' bond to the lost child rushes to the fore. They snap out of the numbness in order to support parents. Yet the sense of unreality persists for a long time.

For Bowlby (1979, 1980) this is the phase of "Numbing". Others refer to it as the stage of "Denial and Isolation" (Kubler-Ross, 1969/1985); "Alarm" (Parkes, 1972/1975); "sense of unreality" and a "feeling of increased emotional distance from other people..." (Lindemann, 1944). The findings of this study concur with certain aspects of the above theorists. Pre-reflectively bereaved siblings erect a barrier to overwhelming sorrow. The immense pain within the loss evokes a fear of emotional release, loss of control, of "collapsing altogether". Thus, the sibling's sense of unreality; the sense of being "outside" the grief (of the "disorientation" common to the loss of any loved person) is in the order of grief and initially it is a way of containing the overwhelming emotions. Gradually the shock gives way to free-floating anxiety. Emotions shift during this period; dramatically, drastically, fluidly. Emotion is the main phenomenon during this wave. Emotions mobilise the grief process. But for the bereaved sibling getting in touch with emotions, feeling them, expressing them, is difficult not only because of the tremendous shock of losing her sibling but also because of the awareness of the parents' profound pain.

This is the time dominated by funeral arrangements and the burial or cremation of the lost loved one. Thus depending upon culture or religious beliefs, funerals and rituals absorb the mourners during this

initial wave. What the individual mourner is feeling or experiencing collides with the traditional rituals. This collision between the individual and the group, and perhaps with the way others outside the group respond to the death, provides a space for the eruption of emotion...or for its concealment. In this wave, while emotions break through any possible denial that the loss has happened, particularly with the viewing of the body, the sense of unreality persists.

Following from this initial wave of the existential situation of sibling loss, is the tidal swell of increasing awareness of the parents' loss of their child and the surviving sibling's response to their intense grief and anguish. The dual position of dealing with their own loss and mourning and having to cope with their parents' struggle, is a heavy load to bear. The protective and supportive behaviours which emerge, while giving the bereaved sibling time to collect herself and to mobilise other resources to cope with her grief, simultaneously amplifies the sense of unreality, of being "outside" the grief. During this wave of the bereavement process, surviving siblings mask their grief. They become the comforters/protectors of parents and, for some, of other significant others (i.e. spouse, friends) but their apparent lack of emotion should not be confused with the initial experience of numbness, disbelief ("denial") as described by Bowlby (1980). It is more than denial. It certainly is not an "absence of grief" as described by Deutsch (1937). It comes closer to what may be described as dissociation or divided consciousness (Shapiro, 1994): the bereaved sibling's awareness of the "gap" and the inner disruption remain acute while in another part of consciousness, she refuses to accept this reality as the waves break and temporarily vanish. It is an attempt to maintain continuity and stability until they can deal with their overwhelming emotions. A sense of being "outside" the grief is experienced as the pain of the bereaved parents continues unabated. Sorrow turns to despair as they realise that there is nothing that they can do to mitigate the parents' profound anguish.

In this part of the experience, the sense of unreality, of being outside the grief, changes subtly to a *stance* of an involved-outsider or participant-spectator, of being *a-part-of* but also *apart-from* the grief situation. Bereaved young adult siblings present a façade of being "strong" and not needing support. The pretence is not just a way of managing life that has been totally disrupted by the loss, but a kind of stance that the sibling takes or is absorbed in. What follows from the stance of involved-outsider? From the present study, it would appear that it is a way to stay functioning when everything around the sibling seems to be disintegrating. It is a way of holding on to familiar structures and a familiar sense of self. For some, it is also an important basis for finding a safe place to grieve. In some respects the sibling's grief for a brother or sister may be said initially to be left "in potential" (Cochran & Claspell, 1987: 112). Given the pain and threat of fragmentation, efforts to control grieving and to distance one's self seem inevitable. Given the sense of responsibility to support parents, to participate in the world, when one is inclined towards withdrawal, a silent struggle ensues.

This early part of the grief constitutes a critical moment in terms of support for the bereaved sibling as, to quote Kierkegaard (1843/1959b: 172): "... in truth, grief steals through the world so secretively that only the sympathetic observer even succeeds in suspecting its presence". The initial silence of bereaved siblings is simultaneously part of the sorrow of having lost a large part of his/her world and the desire to protect parents and not burden them with additional pain. Thus, for the bereaved sibling, the sense of unreality, of detachment (isolation, withdrawal) seems to last a lot longer than the designated "few weeks after the funeral" (Bowlby,1980).

For caregivers, whether friends or extended family, this may be very confusing. It is apparent that there is deep hurt and distress but the bereaved sibling conceals her inner feelings and continues with life as normal. How can others help at this time?

Critical in this early part of the loss is the presence of others who are able to maintain a balance between getting too close (intrusive) or being too distant. For the bereaved sibling it is important that he or she can be as numb, as devoid of feeling, or as emotional as he or she is, and not be reproached for the lack of tears or for too many tears. Attempting to draw siblings out to express or speak about feelings may be perceived as intrusive or threatening. On the other hand, ignoring the sibling and focusing exclusively on the parents' visible and deep sorrow, may increase the sense of isolation and alienate the bereaved sibling even further from the world of others.

Acknowledgement of the loss; acknowledging that the sibling has also experienced a significant loss, listening, and being there as needed, seems to be the most important role of caregivers (friends and extended family) at this time. It is important that the bereaved sibling feels that he or she is not alone. It is the lifeline of warmth, empathy and trust rather than words that will cross the many barriers during this wave.

- **Over-bonding, hyper-connecting**

In Freud's (1917) language, attachment to the lost "object" must become *hyper-invested* in service of *detaching* so that we might *re-bond*. Stated differently, holding on is necessary before we are ready to "let go" and move on; to re-attach. It is a holding pattern. The attachment and "hyper-connecting" describe a double wave washing over the bereaved siblings as they attempt to sustain parents and try to fill the inner emptiness by holding on to memories of their deceased brother or sister. Freud (1917) is clear that none of us allow for a premature letting go of a significant relationship. Siblings in mourning hold on a bit longer.

With time, the pain of the loss and the swelling current of the parents' unrelenting grief evoke a crisis not only of overwhelming emotion but also of daily interaction and identity. For the bereaved sibling

the multifaceted emotional struggle that ensues, like the tide, ebbs and flows back and forth. Initially fear-insecurity and helplessness-hurt-frustration-guilt encapsulate the bereaved siblings' way of being present to their world. Fear and insecurity that they may fragment and/or lose what remains of their family; helplessness, hurt, frustration and guilt as they realise that there is nothing that they can do to mitigate their parents' grief. In the final analysis frustration emerges against the background of fear and a sense of devaluation in relation to the deceased sibling and existential guilt - a sense of "being guilty", of "indebtedness" to parents for life itself: "If I had died, it would not have been so bad for everybody"; "If she (i.e. sibling) had lived, she may have supported parents more effectively than I have"; "If I had taken better care of my brother, mother would not have lost her favourite child". These are some of the thoughts and emotions that play upon the sibling's mind. But it is a frustration/anger/guilt that is born of love and care as well, both for the deceased sibling and for the parents. As noted by Winnicott (1958a), guilt is a small step away from "concern".

Bowlby (1980) sees anger and guilt as aiding in the "search" for the lost loved one. In Freud's terms, this is the necessary over-bonding, hyper-investing. This is the only way, Freud says, to sever the thousand links, "bit by bit", in service of freeing the energy/meaning necessary to go on with life. "It is by hyper-occupying the space between the lost object and self, and by activating memorial intentionality, that mobility in the grief process is achieved" (Alapack, 2006). In this wave, it is the remembering-forgetting dimension of human existence that comes into play. Memories are brought up and examined in order to balance the subtle dialectic of remembering and forgetting. Only by experiencing the range of our own feelings is it possible to find an even keel between what we must remember and what we should be able to "forget"; to "let-be". The review of past events, if done honestly, is the way for a balance to develop. We "forget" naturally as a result of first thinking through, facing something important and letting it be what it was, and is, and probably will be.

The hyper-bonding, the "searching" is precisely a "looking for", a longing for the missing one. The specific aim of searching is to find the one who is gone, of conjuring him or her up, and to that degree keeping his or memory alive; keeping him or her close. Loneliness is very much a part of this searching. Loneliness is the reaction to the deprivation. It is the attunement to the gap that was created by the loss of the brother or sister. The loss of the *loss* is now poignant. The deceased, if he or she is significant, was a referent of the survivor's meaning; the recipient of many different emotions (love, anger, care). Without that unique other, there is nobody towards whom those particular feelings may be directed. To try and express those feelings now would be to express them in a vacuum. This absent other had been a companion, perhaps a source of inspiration and affirmation, the one who defined the survivor spatially and temporally in his or her world, the one who understood what it was like to live with these particular parents. Such a large part of the survivor's world was tied up in a meaningful way with the deceased brother or sister that when he or she is gone, the surviving sibling feels lost and

without direction. In this situation, though, two recipients of emotions have disappeared: the deceased sibling and the parents in their old sense. In the absence of the sibling, communication with parents changes. Thus the "searching" also becomes a search for, or an attempt to recover, the parents that the sibling had known; to recover all the various parts of the self that have been lost.

The searching behaviour seems to prepare the individual increasingly to accept the loss. In the present study, Elena constantly looked for and 'found' her brother. Initially, by taking over her deceased brother's business, Elena was not only supporting her parents and attempting to reconstruct the fractured world of the family, but she was also "doing something for *him*". Stated differently, in doing what he would have done had he lived, Elena searched and "found" her brother again. This also enabled her to continue in the familiar relationship of being his helper-supporter-caretaker. In listening to "stories" about her brother that his friends shared with her, she also searched and found him. Later, she discovered that she had incorporated many of his sayings and mannerisms and she held on to these. She felt that her brother had left her a rich legacy - his "magic" and his "energy" - qualities that were part of her potential and could become part of her now that her brother was no longer there. For Cathy, the "search" was a very real experience where she would wake up thinking that her brother had not died, that it was simply a bad dream and she would hear him whistling and would listen for the noises that he used to make (much like the widows studied by Parkes, 1972/1975). However, in Cathy's situation where she felt responsible for the death, we may view this search not only as a yearning for her lost brother but also as an attempt to undo what had happened - an inability to accept the loss; a feeling that persisted for a long time. Nevertheless, the searching also mobilises her grief and prepares her, in some way, to move tentatively towards accepting the loss.

Another aspect of the searching, is the *search for answers*; seeking an understanding of the death or loss. Beyond blaming others for what happened, beyond blaming self for what we did or did not do, beyond our own regret, there is the quest for bigger answers: "Why did it happen?"; "Why to her or him and not me?"; "Why the accident?"; "Why do good people die young?"; "Why does God allow 'bad' things to happen to 'good' people?". The death of a loved one often provokes a crisis of faith, and one either grows stronger in one's faith as a result of the struggle (Dia), or moves away from God.

During this wave, as in all the waves of mourning, the various emotions that have been described ebb and flow - one day despair, another time fear or guilt, another anger or depression. It is well to remember that the feelings occur repeatedly and not in a particular sequence or order.

The search for the lost one and the quest for answers is a necessary part of the process of working through the loss and should not be dismissed as "senseless". The searching diminishes naturally as the mourner is able to express his or her chaotic emotions. Memories, remembering and recalling, provide

comfort for some, enabling the bereaved sibling to continue with life in the absent "presence" of the deceased sibling. For the mourner, therefore, it is important that he or she can share stories and speak repeatedly of her fantasies because in this way emotions are kept awake and provide new meaning with which to move forward. Unfortunately, others around them are so torn and vulnerable that sharing becomes difficult. When friends and others are also uncomfortable with death and loss, silence is maintained and effectively blocks the mourning process. Few in our society can tolerate being-with-the-bereaved and the preoccupation of the bereaved with the lost one may be perceived as "morbid." On the other hand, bereaved siblings themselves may experience difficulties in talking about their deceased brother or sister. The emotions are too intense and there is a fear of breaking down.

Caregivers' support of, and consistently being-there for the parents in their grief, emerges as important for some of the young adult siblings in this study as this provides a space for them to breathe and to deal with their loss unencumbered by the constant concern of upsetting parents or the anxiety of being sucked into the tidal pool of family grief. Unfortunately, when this happens the sibling is frequently forgotten or ignored and her grief may remain frozen. Friends, extended family and others who are able to tolerate being with the bereaved sibling can be particularly helpful during this wave for the sibling to cry or not to cry, to reminisce and share stories about the deceased and even to discuss concerns relating to parents and, in some instances, for the sibling to clarify her part in the circumstances of the death. This can assist in mobilising the grief process as critical moments arise in relation to the persistent anguish of parents, particularly when silence surrounds the loss.

Movements such as Compassionate Friends (a non-denominational self-help group offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings) and hospice-based support groups for siblings, seem to be very well suited to keeping the process of mourning moving in a positive way. Individuals who have been through a similar life experience can be of tremendous support to one another and can alleviate the sense of personal loneliness and isolation frequently experienced by bereaved siblings. This kind of support group provides an acknowledgement of the sibling's grief, and a sense of belonging, which stimulates the expression of emotion and provides a "safe" space to grieve.

- **De-linking (Detachment) and Re-bonding**

Throughout the previous waves, the bereaved sibling's energies are tied up primarily with the parents; on attempts to sustain them and recover a sense of continuity and stability while simultaneously "searching" for the deceased sibling and attempting to make sense of the loss. Each of these tasks is a major "work" on its own, but when combined extends the grief process of the surviving sibling. This study reveals that the process for the bereaved sibling continues for many years; sometimes for life.

Gradually the survivor comes to realise that she is separate from her parents and from her deceased sibling and that she can live her own life without feeling that she is betraying her loved ones. This third wave ushers in the beginning of a new way of relating to the deceased sibling, the self and the environment. In Object Relations terms, the pre-condition for this is that the lost sibling has been "restored" within (Klein, 1940); internalised. This "inner figure", as noted by Kast (1988), becomes either an inner companion or guide who may also undergo change, or the sibling feels that a great deal that was lived out in the relationship with the deceased has now become part of her own potential. Psychoanalysis refers to this as "identifying" with the lost loved one. However, it is more than identification in the sense of simply living out the lost sibling's un-lived life (doing what he or she would have done); being someone else rather than oneself. Although this is a possibility with the loss of a sibling, particularly when parents try to replace or substitute one of the survivor children for the deceased (Krell & Rabkin, 1979; Fanos, 1996), ultimately, if mourning follows a positive course, and if sensitively handled, this becomes part of reclaiming and integrating parts of the self that had been externalised onto the deceased sibling; of becoming a more authentic self. The process of identification also provides the opportunity to find the self again. As evidenced in this study, Elena realises that while she can continue with her brother's work, she would feel more fulfilled pursuing her own field of interest. This aspect of the over-bonding, in the sense of "identifying" with the deceased sibling, is well illustrated by Angie in the preliminary study: "Looking back on those two years after her death, I realise that luckily I found a balance between who I was and who I always wanted to be - *her*. I am now *me*".

For the bereaved sibling it is also important to "restore" the parents as well as the deceased brother or sister within the self. In this respect, aspects of Klein's (1940) theory of mourning can be recognised in the grief of bereaved siblings as they struggle to assimilate the loss. The survivor is not only involved in transforming the relationship with the deceased sibling, but also needs to "restore" her primary attachment figures; the parents who have been changed by the loss. Apart from the loneliness and longing for the deceased sibling, much of the bereaved sibling's despair emanates from the difficulty in accepting the changes in their parents. In Kleinian (1940) terms, resolving the mourning is facilitated through the bereaved individual having established in her early life the "good" mother inside her. When this has not been securely established within the self, the bereaved sibling struggles with fears of losing the mother internally as well as externally. A loss in the family reactivates the object relations and bereaved siblings need to revisit the primary (maternal/paternal) attachments before they are able to re-link to others outside the family. Where these early attachments have not been securely established, complications in the mourning process can arise. This is evidenced in Cathy's situation where her parents had suffered multiple losses. Her mother's intense grief over the loss of a three year old child during her pregnancy with Cathy, prevented her from getting close to Cathy. With the loss of her brother, Cathy re-experiences the alienation and rejection of her earlier

years and struggles with fears of losing her primary attachments altogether. She uses the metaphor of the "cocoon" to describe the state of non-relatedness within the family as a response to the trauma of the loss of her brother. Yet, help comes to Cathy through the close relationship that she had with her father and she is able to recover a degree of security and stability with which to move forward.

This part of the grief process involves many strong emotions and waves of mourning already passed through. Some may be repeated as the bereaved sibling is once again reminded of the absence of her sibling as she moves into a different phase of her life. Self-doubt is also present as demonstrated by Elena as she begins to gather up the threads of her life and gradually starts to move into her own career. It helps to understand that these are not "relapses" but represent recurring opportunities to assimilate the loss. Having others around that can support the bereaved is important during this phase. To quote Klein (1940: 174): "...if the mourner has people whom he loves and who share his grief, and if he can accept their sympathy, the restoration of the harmony in his inner world is promoted, and his fears and distress are more quickly reduced".

According to Freud (1917), it is important to let go of the lost loved one. Only then are we free to reinvest in other relationships; to re-bond. Even though Freud revised this view following his experience of two severe personal losses in the 1920s (i.e. his daughter and his favourite grandson), a burdensome tendency of his psychoanalytic legacy in the field of adult bereavement is the tendency to perpetuate the belief that normal bereavement is concluded with the dissolution of all ties to the lost object. In terms of sibling loss, a problematic issue that arises from the vision of "severing ties" is the question of "replacement". While it is true that a successful mourning process allows us to be more open to other relationships and while, with the loss of a wife/husband or friend, we can find someone else to love (even though initially it seems that we never will), there is no substitute, no *replacement*, for that other who shared our years of upbringing; an individual who shares the same history. In this respect, sibling loss is unique and should not be confused with other losses. On the negative side, the lost sibling can *never* be replaced and, therefore, the grief over a sibling has an intensity and specificity that is long-lasting; on the positive side, the loss of a sibling in young adulthood does not necessarily prevent us from deepening our relationships with others as these always remain "something else".

However, problems may arise when the grief has not been sufficiently worked through or when there have been multiple deaths in the family of origin and fear of death and loss may then interfere with establishing other close, intimate relationships. When memories and/or fantasies of the bereaved sibling are limited, it is more difficult either to grieve fully or to transform the relationship. This is the situation where the sibling relationship was very distant and/or conflicted. Ambivalence then becomes an issue as the bereaved is unable to identify the *meaning-to-self* of the deceased sibling, i.e. "What"

has been lost in the losing of the sibling. These are the siblings who require sensitive support but who, all too often, are overlooked, or slip quietly into the background.

The present study reveals that for the bereaved sibling the "letting go" or detachment is not a severance or dissolution of ties to the deceased brother or sister. Rather it seems to be a letting go of the grief itself: the pain, hurt, guilt and anger and being able to remember not only that the sibling died but also the fullness of the time travelled together. It is a submission to the changes wrought by the loss, a transformation of the sibling relationship, that liberates the self and allows for a new sense of self to emerge.

For the bereaved sibling, however, there is a very real aspect of "letting go" - in the sense of de-linking (Freud, 1917)) or "detaching" (Bowlby, 1980) - that is intensely painful and that reawakens the sorrow and stress experienced during previous waves. This involves the separation from parents as the sibling begins to move on with her own life. Dia's struggle to leave home points out once more the structural unity, or the relational essence of sibling grief. Leaving home is tantamount to another loss for the parents, another "death", or a vivid reminder of the "real" death. Levinas' (1979) ethical philosophy has relevance here. How does one look at the pain in a mother's/father's eyes and turn away from the demand to be there for them? How deprive them of the opportunity to parent, to *be* parents, when they have already lost a child? How wilfully change the family system one more time; upset the fragile emotional equilibrium achieved with such difficulty, without good cause? Once again, we see the family resisting this change. In the present study the concern/responsibility/guilt towards parents weighed heavily on most of the participants and became an additional source of pain and stress. Caregivers and extended family need to be aware of the sense of helplessness, anxiety and desperation that bereaved young adult siblings experience as they attempt to reclaim the self and move on with their lives. Having others around that can support the bereaved sibling is critical during this phase.

The pattern of sibling grief as it emerged from this study resonates with Kierkegaard's understanding that sorrow never ends; with Freud's altered view of mourning that even if a loved one's place is filled, that significant other is always with us. In the event of the loss of a brother or sister, it also highlights the infinite nature of the sibling bond. In our passages through life, there will always be another situation that will reactivate the missing and the longing. As therapists we need to be aware of this, and not label it "pathological" mourning. All the participants in the present study were coping with their lives at the time of our interview. Some felt strengthened by the experience and were also able to tolerate higher levels of involvement with the suffering of others. The establishment of a different kind of relationship with their sibling (more in recalling) and the transcendent awareness that comes with successful mourning, enables some of the bereaved siblings to grow spiritually and to distinguish

between trivialities and what is essential in life. However, with all this, we must never deceive ourselves. Physical absence triggers acute pain and inner disruption edging toward desperation. Elena's lingering sorrow and longing for her brother is cogent.

Thus far I have traced the pattern of sibling grief, discussed the undulating waves of emotions as these emerged from the study and highlighted the essentially relational dimension of the sibling loss experience. Awareness of the layered grief of bereaved siblings and its long-lasting impact is essential if we are to help individuals to work through the loss experience. But death cannot be made painless. In commenting on how others could best "help" the bereaved sibling, I mean only that bereaved siblings in this extreme situation do not feel completely alone, that with support they can come to terms with the situation to a greater extent and therefore deal more effectively with the loss.

To this end, I would also like to discuss briefly the current professional and cultural perceptions/conceptions of the sibling bond and sibling loss and to what extent these may facilitate or hinder the grief process. This is followed by the implications for psychotherapy. It also revisits the method used in this study, and concludes with suggestions for future research.

7.4 Professional Perceptions of Siblings and Sibling Loss

Perceptions and conceptions that we hold about siblings and sibling loss are determined by our experience with our own siblings, by our cultural beliefs and by the theories (learning) to which we have been exposed. Generally we hold on to our beliefs or value systems whether personal, professional, religious or social-cultural. This provides us with a sense of security and a degree of control and helps us to "make sense" of things. But this narrows our vision and does not allow us to be open to the deeper meanings of the sibling relationship and the impact that the loss of that bond has for the lives of survivors.

In terms of our professional biases/leanings regarding siblings and sibling loss, it is significant that in our scientifically based western culture with our psychological preconceptions of the family (i.e. the individual and the parent), sibling bonds and the many meanings that siblings have for each other over the life span have been minimised. In effect, sibling relationships have not been given a prominent place in psychology and the loss of a brother or sister has also not always been recognised as a significant life event. Psychology has tended to focus solely on the parent-child relationship. Psychoanalytic theory emphasises the nuclear family (mother-child-father) and object relations and attachment theories focus on the pre-Oedipal, early mother-child relationship.

This takes us back to the question of the meaning of a sibling. While different cultures vary in terms of how siblings are perceived, in our western culture the definition of what constitutes a "brother" or

"sister" is based primarily on biological criteria (i.e. sharing one or both parents). The significance of a sibling and the meaning of siblingship is derived from the nuclear family. Siblings often substitute for the parents. When the parent is not there, the sibling is there. The relationship is reminiscent of these early primary attachments. In Winnicottian terms, there is no mother without an infant. Extending this concept, we may rightly say, "there can be no sibling without a brother or sister". Parents cannot divorce their children (even though some parents do abandon their children) and siblings cannot divorce their brothers or sisters (even though some siblings would not care if they never saw their sibling again). They are stuck with them for life. These relationships cannot be cancelled or annulled. Under normal circumstances, when a parent(s) dies, the sibling will still be there. If the sibling is also lost, there is nothing to hold on to.

In the light of existing theories of development, it is understandable that therapists are inclined to perceive most difficulties arising in adulthood as originating from the early mother-child or mother-father-child relationships. But by focusing solely on the parent-child bond we do not open ourselves to the possibility that siblings in and of themselves may have an impact on our clients' emotional and/or social adjustment difficulties. How many therapists or counsellors enquire about the sibling relationship in the initial interview with an adult client? Apart from a cursory note that the "client lost a brother/sister at the age of ... years", how many therapists in fact explore this loss as a significant life event?. Bank and Kahn (1982) alert us to the risk that, by relating most of their client's strong emotional reactions to internalised mother/father images without consideration of the influence of the sibling relationship, therapists might miss valuable information and understanding of their clients that could alter the course of therapy. The loss of a sibling constitutes an instance where the "miniature world" of siblings and sibling dynamics are either ignored or minimised (either by therapist, by client or by both).

The present study affirms the significance of the parent-child bond and highlights that the parents' deep sorrow co-constitutes the grief of surviving siblings. Indeed the interviews with all three participants revealed an inherent ambiguity. Were these surviving women mourners speaking about grief over the death of their sibling or about the complex relationship between mother-daughter and its further complication of the triangles: mother-daughter-dead brother or sister; mother-daughter-father and husband. From my perspective, it would seem to be both. This highlights the point that this is a death-in-the-family: it is relational, a structure...not simply an individual matter. Grief coils within all these bonds; irritates them (Dia), sometimes soothes them (Cathy). Most of the participants experienced the changes in their parents and in their own communication with mother or father as even more stressful and traumatic than the actual loss itself. Yet, it is clear that the sibling is not simply a surrogate for the parent. Elena's longing for her brother "to be there; to be *him*", reveals that siblings have a powerful and unique relationship of their own that is independent of, or rather, that is

a-part-of and also apart-from, the parent-child relationship. The study reveals that the loss of this relationship is deeply felt and the grief over the loss is long-lasting. It is not a question of comparisons; of substituting or exchanging the one for the other, but rather a need to broaden our perspective; to recognise the perspective of the bereaved sibling, while simultaneously acknowledging the essentially relational aspect of such a loss.

Few training programmes in the helping professions prepare the student to deal with sibling loss/grief, let alone to be with it, or simply to allow it to be. Why is it not acknowledged and why has it not been part of mainstream bereavement work for so long? Certainly the emphasis in psychology on the parent-child bond may be a part of it. This focus seems to have contributed to the perception that the horizontal or "lateral" sibling relationships, particularly during childhood and even adolescence, are secondary and relatively unimportant when compared to the "vertical" parent-child relationship. For the most part, developmental theory ends with adolescence and sexual maturity. One moves towards intimacy with others outside the family and towards establishing one's own nuclear family, thus repeating the parent-child cycle all over again. Although Erikson (1959/1980, 1982/1994) does describe adult stages of development and Levinson (1978) and Sheehy (1976) have fleshed these out and presented them in more detail, still the sibling and sibling loss have remained in the shadows.

7.5 Cultural Perceptions and Social Practices

Perceptions-conceptions of siblings and sibling loss are also coloured by our cultural and social beliefs. Although children are valued in most societies and brothers and sisters (i.e. "the children") are encouraged to maintain contact with each other, as far as my reading and knowledge go, there seems to be no record from any society of the significance of the sibling relationship. In most technologically advanced societies, children grow up in small nuclear families with strong and lifelong attachments to particular members, yet "siblinghood" is not a recognised state of significant proportions. Also, socially the many roles that brothers or sisters play in each other's lives (companionship, support, as an important referent throughout life) are not visible or readily acknowledged as central ones in adulthood.

In terms of the grief process, it has to be accepted that it is embedded in cultural and social practices of which the family is a part. Practices that are acceptable in one cultural context may be viewed as pathological or maladjusted in another. For example, in some societies "letting go" of the link to the loved one is considered "normal", while for others (Buddhist religions and some African cultures) a holding on persists and contact with the deceased is maintained, even encouraged.

Although, as already mentioned, the "letting go" of, or "holding on" to the lost loved one is not absolute, its meaning is also reflective of the context in which it occurs. Different cultural contexts

and beliefs give different meaning to the experience. However, rather than generalise how, when, who and for how long an individual should mourn, as therapists we need to be aware of the cultural values and practices and listen to the reality of the one who describes the experience. What religious or cultural beliefs and prescriptions provide is a sustaining environment that not only enables the bereaved to mourn the loss of a significant other, but also guides the behaviour of others towards the bereaved. Unfortunately the weakening of religious and social ties in the Western world abandons mourners (and particularly siblings) to deal with their grief alone.

In his work on bereavement in 20th century Britain, Gorer (1973: 437) reveals that the attitudes, values and institutions prevalent in a given society at a given time can make mourning easier or harder to live with, can "facilitate a benign or maladaptive outcome." His findings indicate that the majority of British society with residual or no religious beliefs receive very little help during the period of intense grief when most mourners are in more need of social support and assistance than "at any time since infancy and early childhood" (1973: 438). Gorer (1973) argues that because mourning has become de-ritualised, the help which contemporary mourners need has no explicit content at present.

Denial of death characterises our western culture (Ariès, 1974, 1976, 1981; Gorer, 1965/1987; Kubler-Ross, 1969/1985). Although the taboo surrounding death has been partially lifted in more recent years, in our contemporary western society the taboo surrounding mourning persists. Faced with grief, we acknowledge it, pay lip service to the need to express it and then hope that it will go away. We are encouraged to "overcome" it as quickly as possible, regain ordinary "control", "adapt" and remain "functional". The less we speak about it the better. This is particularly the case with bereaved young adult siblings who in their attempts to protect and sustain parents put on a façade of being "strong", of "coping well", so as not to burden their parents with additional pain.

Gorer (1973) notes that in the greater number of recorded societies, including Britain up to about sixty years ago, mourners went through what Van Gennep, 1960 (in Gorer, 1973: 424), referred to as a *rite de passage*: a formal withdrawal from society, a period of seclusion during which the mourner withdraws from certain social activities and is distinguished by his clothes or appearance so that other members of society recognise him as a mourner and treat him in prescribed ways, and a formal re-entry into society and to full social participation in one or more stages. Gorer's (1965/1987: 2-3) father died in 1915 (when Gorer was ten years old) and he recalls having to wear a black tie and having black bands sewn on to the sleeves of his suits. Despite his deep unhappiness, he remembers feeling "somehow distinguished"; he was given special attention and treated with great tenderness. He was "set apart and this was somehow fitting and comforting" (1965/1987: 3). When his younger brother, Peter, died of cancer in 1961, Gorer (1973: 425) found that there were no social rules available to guide the behaviour of his brother's widow and children, and much less his own as an

adult surviving sibling. The bereaved person was no longer recognisable by his behaviour or attire as someone who was going through a difficult time. Grief had become a private matter. Others no longer had any guidance from ritual as to how to treat a mourner and so avoided him or her. The absence of social support was brought forcibly to Gorer's (1973) attention in the months following his brother's death and was the main motivation for his research on bereavement in Britain.

Gorer's (1965/1987) findings revealed that with few exceptions (members of Orthodox Jewry, Roman Catholics of Irish origin, and members of the Church of Scotland), mourning was almost completely de-ritualised for the majority of the British. The period of intense mourning was no longer governed by religious or social prescriptions but was determined by the mourner's autonomous feelings. His research left him with a strong conviction that contemporary British (and, he believes, American) society's denial of mourning and the absence of any social ritual for dealing with mourners after the burial or cremation contributed "to much theoretically unnecessary misery" (Gorer, 1973: 436). At the same time that mourning was de-ritualised for the majority of British people, there was also social disapproval. Social responses to any public display of mourning, verbally and by action, marked it as unhealthy, "morbid". The social other withdrew from contact with the bereaved until they behaved as if nothing of significance had happened (1973: 428-429). The absence of ritual and the denial of mourning posed two particular problems: what to tell children about a death in the family, and how to handle the first contacts after the loss between the bereaved and their friends, neighbours or work colleagues. Gorer's (1973: 429) findings indicated that almost half of the informants who had children under the age of sixteen told them nothing at all about the recent death of a close relative and many parents treated the subject as "literally unmentionable."

In terms of the present study, it is apparent that the denial of mourning in our Western society persists. The loss of a brother or sister is a particularly silent experience. All of the participants were unable to talk about their loss either because of a fear of losing control over their emotions and breaking down publicly or, as in Cathy's situation, because others avoided her and her family. There seems to be a collusion between the group and the individual where the embarrassment of others in being-with-the-bereaved resonates with the mourner's own fears of giving way to grief, of losing self-control and, in the case of bereaved siblings, of upsetting parents even more. Thus, at a period when they most need help and comfort from society, siblings are left alone or ostracised.

Rituals express emotions that are too deep for words. Religious practises and ceremonies, e.g. the wake, funeral, memorial service, Kaddish, meet the needs of the bereaved. However, mourning does not end once the initial ritualised period of mourning (usually determined by culture and tradition and shared with others) is over. It is evident from the present study that it is precisely the weeks, months and even years that follow the actual burial or cremation that the pain of the loss is experienced most

intensely, and when the presence of others can be helpful. In this regard, social structures seem to fail to meet the bereaved sibling's needs.

Like Gorer (1965/1987), Ariès (1974, 1981) also emphasises the role that ritual has played historically in guiding mourning, both in terms of providing support for the individual and maintaining the identity of the group when death occurs. By placing death in the context of a world view, ritual makes "sense" of death, and publicly reminds mourners of their shared beliefs. Ariès (1981) notes that in our individualistic and technologically advanced societies, the distance from one's own death increases and the right to mourn is taken away. This also breaks down the ability to "make sense" of death and there is a growing dissatisfaction with the ritual that supports that rationalisation.

Significantly, all the participants in the present study did not find the ritual of visiting the grave of their deceased sibling meaningful or valid. The sense that such a ritual is irrelevant ("I will remember her in my head...I am not going to a *stone!*"; "I hate going to his grave...I don't see the point of it...I really don't like it"), may be symptomatic of the denial of mourning - a symptom of a de-ritualised civilisation - but it also seems to reflect a dissatisfaction with the existing social prescriptions for mourning. However, this dissatisfaction may also become part of a creative process. We need to find or create new ways to mourn together. In the present study possibilities for new rituals emerge that are more meaningful to the bereaved sibling and that facilitate the healing process. Elena acknowledges that, shortly after the death, what she really "loved" was to be with others who had been close to her deceased brother and to *listen* to their "stories" about him. Dia expresses the healing effect and the comfort derived from the constant presence of a close family friend who was *there*, supporting and *doing* rather than *talking* to her. The need to feel connected to others, to experience a sense of community, to have others talking about the deceased among themselves, seem to be "rituals" that meet the needs of the young adult sibling mourning the loss of a brother or sister. Community programmes such as Compassionate Friends, where a group of "strangers" all grieving a similar loss come together and discuss death and their experience of loss without embarrassment, seems to be a completely different approach to a new "ritual". However, while this organisation performs a yeoman's task in facilitating the mourning process, this still keeps mourners isolated within an exclusive group of people who "know" what it is like to lose a loved one. Outside the rooms of such organisations, society's prohibition of mourning and the repression of grief persists.

Western individualistic and pragmatic thought-forms towards the bereaved and bereavement privilege the psychoanalytic idea that "letting go" of the dead is the final resolution to the loss of a significant relationship. The idea, as indicated in this text, is Freud's concession to naturalism and mechanism. But, "letting go" so smacks of a reality-orientation that it prevents us granting even to children the need to retain an enduring bond with the dead (Shapiro, 1994). Are we only interchangeable objects

of need gratification? If so, maintaining attachments to the dead when they can no longer gratify our needs would be inefficient or foolish. Thus, the grief-process would best be time-limited. Our health care system, with its attachment to “stages” and “phases”, mirrors the assumption and expectation that the mourner should “recover”, be ready to go on with his or her life within the duration of one or two years. This study indicates, and the assertion has been echoed by many others in the field, that the labour of mourning is far more prolonged than we would like to believe. More harm than good comes from telling the bereaved that she “should be over it by now”; or from urging the bereaved to stop the “senseless” search, to “fix the problem” as quickly as possible.

Pertinent to the experience of sibling loss is that the grief of siblings is seldom acknowledged. In our “bounce back” (Mehren, 1977) Western society, there is an expectation that the loss experience of siblings is neither intense nor long lasting. They still have their parents, do they not? Although for bereaved siblings, there is a definite loss in the world, the validation, if any, is usually in respect of the loss of a *child* and not for the loss of a *brother* or *sister*. Social support for adult siblings is minimal as family and friends are concerned about the parents’/spouse’s/children’s intense grief and the bereaved sibling may experience a sense of being dispossessed of the status of mourner. We have all been to funerals where siblings withdraw quietly to one side while everyone commiserates with the parents and/or spouse of the deceased.

Because sibling loss emerges as such a silent and hidden, yet internally disruptive experience, the study has implications for interpersonal situations in which encounters with bereaved siblings are involved. For instance, it has implications for teachers/lecturers, employers, friends, neighbours, indeed, anyone who may have contact with a bereaved sibling. How would a lecturer/teacher or employer respond to an individual taking leave of absence as a result of the loss of a brother or sister? And how would these same people respond to a decline in grades or work performance following sibling-loss?. Significantly in South Africa, it is the indigenous people who will, more often than not, request extended leave of absence following the death of a brother or sister. In our society this is frequently regarded with some scepticism rather than as a genuine desire to pay respects to the lost brother or sister or to an individual who has shared a history, a cause or a “family” (the group or tribe); someone who is “like a brother”. Rather than questioning the need to honour this relationship, we should learn from this. This could inform us regarding the importance of other less recognised losses, such as the loss of a close friend.

The bereaved young adult sibling, understandably, presents a front of “coping well” or of being “unaffected” by the loss. Caregivers and clinicians are also vulnerable to cultural bias and may fall into the trap of believing that what is visible, or apparent, is true. Like most human beings facing the shattering implications of death and grief, caregivers want to be reassured that grief is a blow from

which one does in fact recover. Thus, as therapists we may overlook this significant life event and leave the survivor with intense inner feelings of fear and unresolved grief that may impact on his or her life and even on future generations. To the extent that this study can enhance social awareness through a deeper understanding of what it means to lose a brother or sister, it could make a difference to bereaved siblings. Workshops or courses using "The General Narrative" and "The General Psychological Structure" (possibly with modifications), could extend the awareness of others of the intense pain of bereaved siblings, help others to learn to speak about death, and hopefully break the silence surrounding sibling loss.

7.6 Implications for Psychotherapy

It has been documented (Moss & Moss, 1986; Pape, 1999) that few adults seek psychological help around sibling issues or sibling loss. In the present study, only one of the three participants sought counselling and did so only late in the grieving process. In the face of the parents' intense and appropriate grief, bereaved siblings frequently find themselves fighting a lonely battle in the dark. Within the family context, they slip into the background and are forgotten. Their sorrow goes unacknowledged.

What emerged from the study is that the participants were able to let go and grieve in the presence of a trusted other, someone outside the family grief who was prepared to listen, would not insist that the bereaved reveals more than she was ready to reveal, and would not impose his or her meanings on the loss or judge the survivor's responses as appropriate or inappropriate. In this respect, the unconditional acceptance, empathy and positive regard of a psychotherapist would seem to be ideal in creating a safe space for the expression of painful emotions. In the relationship with a therapist/counsellor, the client can acknowledge the story of her loss and reveal her truth. Yet, bereaved siblings seldom come to therapy with the loss of a brother or sister as the primary presenting issue. A possible understanding of this is provided by Cathy who, through her own loss experience, and as a teacher, became acutely aware of social attitudes regarding counselling/therapy:

"I think on looking back, bereavement counselling would have helped a lot, you know. But ... you know it's also still very much a new area, this counselling thing. They *counsel* children that have *emotional* problems but they don't regard a *loss* as a counselling problem..."

Granted that grief is a normal process and will subside after a certain lapse of time, the present study reveals that grief does not simply burn itself out. Cathy's cry for help reflects our lack of understanding of the dilemma not only of bereaved children but also of young adult siblings in grief. The perception that counselling/therapy is an appropriate intervention for *emotional* and/or behavioural problems but not for bereavement arises in part from some of the "myths" that have surrounded grief but which are gradually being dispelled, namely: that grief is a private affair, that

"time heals", and that self or other referral for therapy is, in itself, an indication of a "pathological" grief reaction rather than a healthy sign of wanting to make sense of the loss.

Psychotherapy - not always easy to embrace for one who has suffered such a traumatic loss and who resists the opening of the floodgates - mobilises the grief and facilitates the mourning process. Through discourse, sharing and confiding in another, the mourner is able to re-experience a sense of community and begins to feel that she is not completely alone. This serves to make her feel that someone shares the burden of what she is experiencing, knows what she is going through. But it is more than this. The findings reveal that it is the "outsider", the one who is not enmeshed in the family grief (therapist/counsellor, spouse, friend) that liberates the mourner from the conspiracy of silence, from the dual entrapment with mother/father, and allows for the truth (the intense pain, guilt, anger) to be revealed. In the therapeutic dialogue too, the mourner breaks through the silence, confronts her self-deceptions (inauthentic self), thus unravelling the *knotted* grief and forwarding the grief process.

In the relationship with the therapist, the opportunity is created for the mourner to return to the past and to find a balance between remembering and forgetting. Returning to the past provides clarity in the present and facilitates movement into the future: "The past is a burden for those who forget it..." (Paul, 1973: 224). Each and every memory (both positive and negative) is brought up and reintegrated with new meaning to provide the capacity to move forward. With bereaved siblings there are a "thousand and one" links or memories so the process takes a long time. Remembering, and remembering correctly, is essential for the resolution of grief. Attachment to the memories and meanings of the past facilitates a sense of continuity with which to move forward but it is in *telling* her story that new meaning is created and which facilitates the healing process.

Through discussion the mourner is able to re-experience the bonding/attachment; hyper-bonding and de-tachment of the loss experience. In this respect, the therapy situation is analogous to the "work" of mourning. In the relationship with the therapist, the mourner initially recovers a sense of oneness and wholeness but, as with the loss of her brother or sister, she realises that this is an illusion and that she is separate. The termination of therapy confronts the mourner once again with the sense of incompleteness and separateness.

Particularly if transference has taken place, conclusion of therapy can either be delayed or the relationship may be abruptly ended. Awareness of the transference and working through the separation anxiety enables the bereaved to move deeper into her mourning process. Her capacity to let go of someone who had meant something to her - without losing herself in the process - is tested. Kast (1982/1988: 105) views the conclusion of therapy as involving "leave-taking in a wider context -

death in the broadest sense". Being able to tolerate the repeated necessity to part and committing the self to a life of involvement with others reveals whether or not the mourning process has succeeded.

Counter-transference, particularly when the therapist has also experienced the loss of a sibling, is possible and this could complicate the therapy process. In such a situation, the therapist may identify with the sufferings of the mourner and may also experience depressive anxiety. Rather than allowing the client to mourn, the therapist may attempt to alleviate the pain of the bereaved sibling by providing answers, etc. However, while counter-transference may complicate the therapy situation, in effect the therapist who has experienced such a loss, and has sorrowed (Kierkegaard, 1847/1962) through his or her own losses, is frequently better able to tolerate being-with-another in his or her pain and this can be very productive in therapy. Indeed many mourners report that speaking with someone who "has been through" a similar loss is qualitatively different to discussing the pain of their loss with others.

Another issue, in terms of counter-transference, concerns the therapist's perceptions of sibling bonds (whether these are viewed as significant or only secondary to parental bonds) and the extent to which the therapist has dealt with his or her own sibling issues. In terms of psychotherapy, therefore, therapists need to be in touch not only with how they view death and dying, but also how they feel about their own sibling relationships. Working with siblings who have lost a brother or sister confronts us with our own sibling issues: the love, loyalty, jealousy, rivalry, guilt, fears. In such a situation we need continuously to examine ourselves in order to avoid projecting our own unresolved feelings (saviour, persecutor, victim) into the therapeutic relationship.

In respect of theoretical perspectives of *grief*: while bereavement theories do have value and have been acknowledged throughout the text of the present study, the findings reveal that theory *per se* and knowledge of stages and phases of grief are empty and hollow when it comes to coping with a sorrow-filled heart. What this study reveals is that theoretical knowledge is of minimal value to the individual who really needs to express her pain in the relationship with the therapist. The individual benefits from the opportunity to freely express feelings in the therapeutic relationship. It is through *dialogue with an Other* and finding a personal perspective in her own loss; it is in establishing where she *finds herself* in the present situation; *that* is valuable for the bereaved sibling.

7.7 Revisiting the Method

The purpose of this study was to contribute to an understanding of sibling loss by approaching it from an experiential rather than from a quantitative perspective. The aim was to focus on the unique personal meanings, the quality and texture, of the phenomenon as lived by the participants rather than focusing on facts derived from statistical findings. It is this specificity - the individual, the particular,

the singular one - that the existential-phenomenological approach privileges. In an apparent paradox, this approach also privileges the family. Deep subjectivity is implicated and relational. The human is a network of relationships. Thus, the phenomenological approach used in this study reflects the experience as a gestalt.

In exploring and attempting to understand this unique loss experience, the method used was effective in providing a clear and cogent picture, heartfelt and reflective, of what it means to suffer the loss of a brother or sister. I must acknowledge that in listening to the stories of these bereaved siblings: the poignant, almost sacred memories of the many shared childhood and adolescent experiences; the intense and deep longing for the physical presence of the deceased sibling; the agony of witnessing and experiencing the changes in their devastated parents; the sense of loneliness and alienation - I was deeply touched and at times even regretted having started this study. However, in effect, I had no control over the true beginning point of this project, the loss of my brother many years ago, that has motivated my interest in, and openness to, the suffering of others and more specifically to the loss of a brother or sister. This research, in the end, provided a forum for me to revisit an experience that was far more complex than I had originally believed or imagined.

The phenomenological method as used in this study revealed many aspects of the experience that are present to the clinical psychologist: the conflicted and paradoxical emotions of sibling loss; the trauma of this unmentionable experience; the heavy sense of responsibility to protect and support parents and, in some instances, other significant others; the tendency to put aside the self and attempt to evade their own pain; the loneliness and isolation and the long-lasting impact of the loss. In this respect, the findings of this study can help to bridge the gap between research and practise; between theory and the actual lived experience.

This research, using the phenomenological method, has hopefully deepened our understanding of the experience of sibling loss. It is possible that more could have been revealed if, for example, a follow-up interview had been arranged and thus different nuances of the siblings' experiences might have been disclosed; if male participants had also been included; and if individuals from different cultural groups had been interviewed. However, it is apparent from the present study that the phenomenon is very broad and that it is not possible to deal with all the complex psychological aspects in a single study. To quote Qualls (1998: 342), "In phenomenological analysis, there is never *one* way to interpret the essence or meaning of any given set of ...descriptions. Rather, on the basis of his or her self-reflective sensitivities and interpretive sense, each researcher offers *a* way in the hope of deepening one's understanding of the experience being investigated". Like the therapeutic interview, certain aspects of the experience emerge in the research interview and require further exploration. By exploring certain themes rather than others, the researcher co-constitutes the meanings of the

phenomenon under investigation but this does not mean that the study is not empirically sound. Rather it reveals the complexity of the phenomenon and the need for further research. What the present study does provide is a deeper understanding of the loss of a sibling as experienced by young female adult siblings who were still living at home at the time of the death of their brother or sister.

7.7.1 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study is that all the participants were white middle-class professional people from relatively small families, and all were young adult females who were still living at home at the time of the death of their sibling. It is possible that because all those interviewed were young adults and all were still living at home at the time of the death, the findings might reflect a greater emphasis on the participants' sense of responsibility over their parents' loss and grief. Immersed in their parents' grief and the heaviness of the atmosphere in the home, their parents' loss emerges as intensely painful and traumatic and, in many respects, delayed the participants' mourning. Although Pape's studies (1999, 2002) of the experience of sibling loss in early to mid-adulthood (participants slightly older than those in the present study and not living at home) also revealed that all of the siblings interviewed were keenly aware of their parents' pain over the loss of their adult child, none of these same siblings felt that their grief experience was in any way impeded by the extent of their parents' grief reaction. However, in a private communication with her, Pape (2002) reported that of the few bereaved adult siblings that were in therapy with her, all had reported that their parents' grief "definitely delayed their mourning". Thus, it would seem that even if the survivors are not living at home, the bereaved sibling still responds to the parents' pain and feels the responsibility (although perhaps not to the same degree) to support, and to be there for them. In the lived experience, this dimension seems to be significant and, as therapists, we need to be aware of this and enquire about this aspect as well.

7.7.2 Implications of the Study

As already discussed, this study has implications for parents, extended family, friends, neighbours, pastors, caregivers and even for teachers/lecturers, employers - indeed anyone who may have contact with a bereaved young adult sibling. Because the complex, fluctuating, vibrant and infinite nature of the sibling *bond* is too little understood, the *loss* of a sibling also appears to be more easily overlooked. While attempts have been made to redress this oversight, research has tended to focus narrowly on the "closeness" and centrality of a brother or sister in one's life as positively related to the intensity of the grief of bereaved siblings and the risk of prolonged mourning of survivors. Although the present study concurs with these findings and with the suggestion that siblings who were particularly close to each other require attention from healthcare workers, my findings also reveal that it is not only those siblings who had a close relationship to their deceased sibling who were deeply affected by the loss and, indeed, that a distant and polarised sibling relationship may also evoke deep

sorrow. Even if the relationship was distant, the potential for greater closeness is lost and needs to be mourned, the gap is still felt, the parents' grief is still intense and impacts on the sibling's loss experience, and the externally defined roles and inter-relationships within the family still change. Indeed, those siblings whose relationship with the brother or sister was distant or ambivalent seem to require as much, if not more, support in order to clarify their part in the whole experience. Everyone who is involved with, and cares for, bereaved siblings needs to be aware of this and not neglect the sibling who was "not close" to the deceased brother or sister: e.g. siblings that fought a lot, did not share secrets or belongings, were too far apart in age to be really close. Even the sibling who did not know the brother or sister (as in the event of a stillborn sibling or when siblings have been separated for a long period of time), he or she still lives in the shadow of parental mourning. This affects the relational and communicational value of the parent-child bond and impacts on the surviving sibling(s). These aspects are most dramatically demonstrated by Cathy's painful experience of the loss of her brother.

As already mentioned, the implications of the study for psychotherapy are rich. Although it has been documented that adults seldom come to therapy with the loss of a sibling as a primary presenting issue, in clinical settings we often deal with issues that are seemingly unrelated to sibling loss (e.g. more recent losses of a parent or spouse, anxiety, panic attacks, burnout, depression) only to discover in the course of therapy that the individual had at some point experienced the loss of a brother or sister. It is important to enquire into previous losses as often crises in later life could be amplified by previous losses that have been too little mourned. In addition, it would appear from the present study that individuals who have experienced sibling loss and have either not had the opportunity to talk about the loss or have themselves been unable to express or to share their deeper emotions with others, do not always realise the full significance of the loss of a brother or sister. The deeper meanings of the loss only emerge over time and may need to be dealt with again as survivors move through different passages in their lives, in order to reach fuller resolution.

Also of significance is that, in certain instances, motherhood (or fatherhood) may afford opportunities to replace, in some way, the lost attachment relationship to the deceased sibling with all the implications of overprotection and "preciousness" of the newborn that this way of coping with sibling loss entails. Dia's awareness of the possibility of resurrecting her lost sister through her daughter is cogently demonstrated in the present study. Not all parents may be as aware of this risk as this participant was. As psychotherapists we need to be open to this possibility when a child or adolescent is referred for therapy, and enquire about all previous family losses.

It also seems possible to find the implication of this study in a counselling/student-counselling setting. The loss of a brother or sister impacts on one's sense of self. For bereaved young adult siblings, the

tenuously consolidated identity of the previous stage (adolescence) is shaken, not only because of the shift in roles and the changes in the communication patterns within the family, but also because the loss of a sibling is a loss of a part of self. The bereaved sibling questions, "Who am I *now*?"; "Where am I going *now*?" and this could also create confusion regarding one's vocational choice. For example, a bereaved sibling may involve himself or herself in the deceased siblings' work (Elena) as a way of maintaining the closeness with him or her or in a desire to integrate some of their sibling's characteristics by recreating what had been lost within the self. It may also be a way of keeping the family together and maintaining stability and continuity. In other instances, a career choice may be based on a need to compensate for the parents' loss of the hopes and expectations that they had for their deceased child's future, or even a means of trying to make parents happy again; of filling the void created by the loss. Career counsellors should be aware of the impact of sibling loss on identity and enquire about siblings and about all family losses, both recent and past, if they are to obtain a deeper understanding of the emotional dedication of the individual seeking guidance to one or other career or field of study, or the feeling of discomfort and unhappiness in a certain course or work environment.

7.7.3 Possibilities for Future Research

Further qualitative research is indicated, particularly in the field of sibling loss beyond young and middle-adulthood, i.e. during "maturity" when most sibling losses occur. Although the present study contained some diversity in terms of culture and religion, further qualitative research is also indicated that would include a broader group of participants, both male and female and coming from a larger family. In addition, specific issues raised by the participants themselves in the present study, and closely related to the suggestion for further research in larger families, is the question of what happens in the sibling group when one of its members is lost? How does this loss affect the communication between and amongst surviving siblings? Would having more siblings be more of a burden than a support?

7.8 Concluding Comments

Brothers and sisters have been dying since the beginning of time and yet this loss experience has only relatively recently been considered to be a topic worthy of research. My experience with bereaved siblings has taught me that the lived experience of sibling-loss is one of the most traumatic and lonely events in a young adult's life, and that the impact of such a loss is indeed, in many instances, lifelong. Although there is evidence that adult siblings do return to a successful level of external functioning, they do not return, unchanged, to the way they were before the loss of a brother or sister and often the *grief work* is far more prolonged than we would like to acknowledge. Clearly the resolution of sibling loss is not simply about coping, adjustment, "being functional". Bereaved adult siblings do this well. But grief does not simply burn itself out with time. True healing requires acknowledging the past with

its truth and transforming the anger, hurt and pain into love and forgiveness. Insofar as I genuinely forgive and "forget" whatever pain I have suffered at the hands of the imperfect "other", to that degree I am able to forgive my own flawed fragility and tolerate my own weaknesses and my mistakes.

This study was undertaken in the hope that the findings would enhance our awareness and our professional understanding of this intensely painful, existentially disruptive but silent phenomenon. When we lose a close family member, mere knowledge of the "stages" or phases of grief is comfortless. Our quest for completeness - to explain and predict outcomes - gets in the way of true dialogue and may alienate and silence bereaved siblings even further. It is through acknowledgement and concretely understanding an individual sorrow-filled heart, rather than explanation or interpretation, that empathy is enhanced. The empathic listener is what the bereaved sibling needs most of all.

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APPENDIX A

Tables I & II



TABLE I

Participant 2: Dia

*NATURAL MEANING UNITS**CENTRAL THEMES*

<p>1. Just want to give [you] the background. Um ... um ... She was very ...un- ... un- ... un- ... un-sure of herself. Right! [No] I don't think 'unsure' but I am struggling to find a word for it ... [not unsure] ... but she asked for a lot of confirmation if she ... if she... I think that the best ... what I can remember the most about her voice was that she would say, for example: “Not so? ...” and she had a little (pet) name for me, you know. So it was ... she did seek confirmation - “Not so? ...” Very well. On the other hand, perhaps I am overdoing [the description of] her (i.e. exaggerating). I don't know. You know, that was the difference between the personalities. I was much more daring, she would not take chances. I was ... I know I experienced some impatience, and on the other hand I knew that she was not as fragile as she ... as I thought she was ... if I think very quickly ... I am expressing this very clumsily! I always suspected, and I think almost intuitively knew, that she was stronger than what appeared on the surface. If she did not want to do something, she would not do it. Not stubborn, but she could ... she could ... she could ... yes ... And it took a lot, but she would do it ... you had to push her up</p>	<p><i>(1)</i> Dia recalls the personality differences between herself and her sister as young children: Dia more daring; her sister, not taking chances and seeking constant affirmation. Although Dia became impatient with her sister, she knew almost intuitively that her sister was not as weak as she seemed to be and that she was capable of more than appeared on the surface.</p>
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to that.	
<p>2. So she had the privilege of being afraid, I did not because I am a loud mouth ... I pretended that I was not scared. So if it was dark, I had to walk with her, you see, but it was my choice just as much as it was hers. So there is no resentment if I say this. Not at all. I almost want to laugh about it (laughs) ... I realise we ... we ... had certain roles ... we ... And it was stupid, you know. I thought that I was proving something and she ... well she enjoyed the safety that naturally was very important to her. So if we ... we were small then ... just to give you a picture of the differences between the two of us.</p>	<p>(2) In retrospect, Dia finds it amusing that she relegated the “privilege” of being afraid to her sister while she pretended that she was not afraid. She realises that by assuming these roles, both their needs were met in a mutually satisfying way and recognises their interdependency.</p>
<p>3. In Matric (final year of High School), she started going out with this chap who was in Matric with her. We knew the family. You know, the families knew each other. Also the nieces, you know, the aunt - my mom's sister, all three families knew each other well ... This chap (sister's boyfriend) and I clashed volubly many times because we were very similar (laughs). Um ... and ... and ... he had many ideas, which were totally ridiculous to me ... so that you couldn't ... things like: a girl should not wear something without sleeves. You must remember that that was a time when we were not even allowed to ... we had to wear slack suits, you know. That was the <i>worst</i> that you could do. So you have a picture of the time (laughs). So that was the type of thing that we would differ on but further</p>	<p>(3) Her sister met and married a young man who was well known to the family and although Dia clashed with her brother-in-law on minor issues, overall she got on well with him.</p>

<p>than that we actually got on very well together. And then they were married. Then she ... she had studied Music and then she did her higher diploma in teaching (HOD) and started teaching ... it could also have been ... No, she did complete her teachers' diploma first and then she started teaching.</p>	
<p>4. And I think they were married for only one-and-a-half years and then she died. He was still busy with his medical studies. He would have finished that year. He was ... to tell the truth ... it was a motor vehicle accident ...</p>	<p>(4) Dia's sister was married for only one-and-a-half years when she was killed in a motor vehicle accident.</p>
<p>5. And we were ... she came down with us to the seaside house and we were there for about ten days and then he arrived; he did his practical in B... and then he also came down. So he was also there for a while and then we drove back together, the two of them in their car and I travelled with my parents ...</p>	<p>(5) Dia recalls that she and her parents were briefly reunited on holiday with her sister before her sister's husband joined them and then they separated again for the journey home.</p>
<p>6. ... and luckily he wanted to drive faster than we did (i.e. that they were ahead of parents and Dia) and we ... we suspect that he fell asleep ...you know, it is ... I suspect, because I can remember times that she travelled with me, that it was not impossible that when he started to go off the road that she grabbed at the steering wheel because she was ... she was inclined to do that, you know, she became so <i>panicky</i>. So I ... I don't know ... but I wouldn't be surprised. Anyway no one else was involved. She was killed instantly ... And the other (i.e. husband)... a doctor</p>	<p>(6) On the way home, her sister was killed instantly in a motor vehicle accident and her husband suffered serious injuries. The family suspected that her sister's husband fell asleep at the wheel but Dia considered the possibility that her sister might have grabbed the steering wheel as the car left the road because she knew that her sister was inclined to panic in a crisis.</p>

<p>arrived at the scene...and he was actually in a terrible state. He had all sorts of injuries: a broken... and ... all sorts of things and they quickly took him to B. This happened just outside C so it's about an hour-and-a-half, I think from B. Um... and a car came from the front and stopped us and [they] said that there had been an accident and the woman is...and they had... that's apparently what <i>he</i> told them to say: "Stop, stop the mother-in-law and them" or something (to that effect), you know. He could still ...</p>	
<p>7. And then ... so we had to go to K, I think ... Yes, K was the closest mortuary where they took her; they took him on to B. So we first had to go to K...to ... [identify] ...the body, you know... But now, can you ... How terrible! Can you think, for my parents? So from there...that took a long time.</p>	<p>(7) Dia was immediately and deeply aware of her parents' pain and her main concern as the family travelled to the mortuary was the horror of it for her parents.</p>
<p>8. Strange, but I can remember a youngster, he was the son of a minister of religion, he was younger than I was. I think he had just started to study (at university), and <i>he</i> really... you know, he went to a lot of trouble to talk to me for a <i>long</i> time...you know...I don't know if his mother and father said to him : "Shame. Talk to the young girl", you know, that sort of thing (laughs). I remember the discussion so... so well, you know. How dear he was without trying, trying to be too consoling. To me he was such a dear.</p>	<p>(8) Dia remembers clearly, and with warmth and appreciation, her conversation at the mortuary with a polite young man who spoke with her at length without attempting to offer easy consolation.</p>
<p>9. And then we went to B. and sat at Casualties for hours to find out what had</p>	<p>(9) In addition to the loss of her sister, the condition of her sister's husband was</p>

<p>happened to him (i.e. sister's husband). And then...Then we...then my mother's sister who had a very good friend who was a pathologist, she got the doc(tor) to come quickly and his parents. So we stayed, I think, about a week in B. because at that stage it was touch and go with him, you know ... he almost didn't make it ... It was terrible. You know it was ... it was ... Oh! You know it was a Volkswagen ... Ag, at that time there were no safety ... You know, she actually had the safety belt on and she just ... that was all that was wrong ... just here she had a terrible blue bruise. I almost think it was her neck that ... then we ... When he was better then we went [home].</p>	<p>critical and the family stayed near the hospital until he was off the danger list before resuming their journey home.</p>
<p>10. Then we had the funeral and that...that was terrible. But my experience of that was that I could cut out. There were people who took responsibility for my parents, people, you know, that coped with them and, mercifully, I could then withdraw ...</p>	<p>(10) The funeral was highly emotional but Dia was greatly relieved to find that she could block out the emotions. There were others who assumed responsibility for her parents and she withdrew.</p>
<p>11. I cannot verbalize such things immediately. I have to lie on my bed; I need to sort out my thing and then I will ...Only when I feel that I can cope, then I'll talk about it but not before. Before that you must please leave me alone (laughs). And I think that is what saved me. I had time to be alone.</p>	<p>(11) Dia could not immediately respond to her loss. She is aware that she needs time to reflect and digest before she can talk about painful emotions and she realises that having time to be alone helped to preserve a sense of integration and enabled her to cope.</p>
<p>12. You know, this I remember, that I phoned this friend of mine a few times ... from the hotel ... that's right ...ja ... whew! ... that was long ago, good heavens!</p>	<p>(12) Although she wanted to be alone, Dia recalls with surprise that she contacted her close friend (who had also lost a sister) a few times immediately after the accident.</p>

<p>13. Anyway ... then ... he was still very bad, but then I had to finish my thesis. So I had something that I needed to get to work on immediately which also, in a way, made it easier. Um ...</p>	<p>(13) Although her sister's husband was still in a bad state, the completion of her thesis demanded Dia's immediate attention and having something to keep her busy also made it easier for her.</p>
<p>14. She was buried ... I felt bad that she was buried before her husband could be there. Yes. It was almost as if he had difficulty with ... with closure ... you know, it was bad for him. Um ...</p>	<p>(14) Dia regretted that her bother-in-law was unable to be present at her sister's funeral and she realises that he experienced difficulties in coming to terms with his wife's death.</p>
<p>15. and then ... my ... my ... I think my parents, for me, were the greatest</p>	<p>(15) Of all the people affected by the loss, Dia realises that, for her, her parents were her greatest concern.</p>
<p>16. I had a friend at that stage but not that I would trust him ... it takes longish for me to trust a guy (fellow) to talk to him about things that I have not yet sorted out. This sort of talking (i.e. the interview) is not a problem for me, not at all, but if I have not yet sorted it out... emotional ... emotional trust, I find difficult. So with him I didn't really ...</p>	<p>(16) Although Dia had a friend at that stage she could not share her deeper feelings with him as she finds emotional trust difficult and cannot discuss feelings that she has not had time to reflect on and to process.</p>
<p>17. And my friends were there ... they were very ... And some of my female friends ... and her sister who studied with my sister ... so they also knew her well, which made it more involved ... from their side. [They were there for me] ... Absolutely! But as much as you can support someone else when you also have to hand in your thesis, you know, and you are busy arranging your wedding, and so on, because they were all, you know, in line ... and, you know, it was not as if I experienced it that they were not there, never, but they had other priorities, absolutely.</p>	<p>(17) Dia experienced her friends and her sister's friends as involved but she was also aware that they had other priorities and she did not expect a great deal of support from them.</p>

<p>18. After that, for me ... for a very long time, it was terrible the way my parents handled it.</p>	<p>(18) For a long time after the funeral, her parents' way of dealing with the loss was a source of great distress to Dia.</p>
<p>19. Because she was so small and delicate and lovable ... Really a lovable person ... it almost went to the point of idolatry, you know. So much so that at one point I said, "You are remembering incorrectly." You know, they ... they ... they sort of ... not that I felt that I was not getting enough attention, no, never, never. It was never that. It just factually irritated me ... the twisting of facts because that person was no longer there ... that was for me ... You know ... it's too silly... For me it was ...</p>	<p>(19) Although Dia was aware of her sister's many appealing (lovable) qualities, her parents' preoccupation with their deceased child and their tendency to idealise her, annoyed Dia and prompted her to confront them with their apparent distortion of the facts.</p>
<p>20. And then those terrible regular visits to the cemetery... I very quickly said : "No thank you! I... I will remember her in my mind. I am not going to a stone." You know that sort of attitude (laughs). Terrible! It was very difficult to cope with...</p>	<p>(20) Dia dreaded, and experienced great difficulty in coping with the family's habitual visits to the cemetery. She resisted this ritual, asserting her view that she would rather remember her sister in her mind.</p>
<p>21. And they also handled it very differently, the two of them, which for me was also very... noticeable and which, I think, did some damage to their relationship. Not that there were ever drastic problems, you know, just the usual differences over things, but they definitely um... My father wanted to speak about it continuously. He was a very emotional, sentimental, expressive person and ... and ... and yes, and expressed his emotions much more and my mother wanted to keep it very private and I think it was</p>	<p>(21) In addition, Dia was painfully aware of her parents' divergent ways of coping with their grief and of the subtle conflict that weakened their relationship. Her father wanted to talk incessantly about the loss while her mother preferred to keep her feelings private.</p>

very difficult for them.	
22. I realised that I would have to ... that I would rather handle it like my mother did than like my father (did).	(22) Dia preferred to deal with her loss in the same way as her mother did rather than like her father but she felt caught between her parents and experienced inner conflict.
23. It is almost as if he wanted to expose it and we were not ready for the exposure but his way of coping was to expose it, you know. So there was a conflict, which was a little difficult. It was actually ... yes, and ... it is... I mean it is both their need(s) and they had an equal right to deal with it in their own way but then there was no support for each other. So it was actually ... that was the most difficult of the whole...	(23) It was painful for Dia to experience her parents' different ways of coping with the loss (concealing-revealing feelings), but especially difficult was the realisation that their conflicting needs left them unable to support each other.
24. At one stage I was irritated with my father. Because he threatened me in a way, in the sense that he ... he ... he wanted to drag things out of me that I did not want to speak about ... you know ... he wanted to talk about it and I didn't want to then. I'm not saying that he as a person was threatening, but he created situations that were a threat to me. And I wanted to get away. And the more I wanted to ... you know, we both felt ... oh, shame (laughs) ... It was terrible. Shame! It was terribly bad for them.	(24) Dia was not ready to speak openly about her sister's death and by trying to draw her out and penetrate the silence, her father unwittingly created situations that threatened her emotionally. She became annoyed; wanted to escape but at the same time felt a deep compassion for her father and realised how painful the loss was for both of her parents.
25. After that I went to J ... the next year I went to J to work.	(25) The following year, Dia went to work in a city at some distance from her parents' home
26. Oh! ... and that <i>first</i> Christmas, and the <i>first</i> birthday, good heavens what a drama! And <i>to this day</i> , even <i>now</i> , if you forget her birthday, and if you forget the	(26) Dia recalls the emotional intensity of the <i>first</i> Christmas and the <i>first</i> birthday after her sister's death and she is aware that, even to this day, family relationships

<p>day that she died, then things are uncomfortable. I have never forgotten but I know I must make an effort. A person will certainly do it. I will do it. I remember it but I think one should not actually <i>celebrate</i> it. I would like a quiet time by myself ...</p>	<p>become strained if she does not observe anniversary dates with her parents. In the awareness of her parents' hurt, Dia feels compelled to share these occasions with them even though she would prefer to spend a quiet time on her own.</p>
<p>27. Very often, I have often wondered, if it were my <i>child</i>, how I would handle it.</p>	<p>(27) In an attempt to understand her parents' grief, Dia has often questioned how she would have reacted if she had lost a <i>child</i>.</p>
<p>28. The other factors ... from my side ... the phases that I passed through. I remember ... It was ... It was when I was married ... Oh wait, let me first tell you ...</p>	<p>(28) Dia remembers a stage of mobility in her grief that occurred when she got married but returns to describe an earlier phase.</p>
<p>29. ...It was ... this was a thing that was very difficult ... to ... almost to, not really to get permission, but <i>emotionally</i> to give <i>myself</i> permission to move away from home. <i>That</i> was very bad. Because I was the only one that was left and I ... um ... half realised that their support for each other was not so good and I was for them ... a sort of catalyst between them ... for me it was ... I remember it was <i>terrible</i> to have to go and tell them that I wanted to move into a flat. For me it was ... ah! ... it was worse than going into an examination ... (laughs)... you know. It was grim ... it was really grim ...</p>	<p>(29) For Dia, an extremely stressful aspect of the loss experience was separating from her parents and her decision to leave home became a formidable and complex emotional task. More than getting her parents' permission was the inner struggle to give <i>herself</i> permission to leave as Dia realised the importance of her supportive role in maintaining the family integrity and in facilitating change in her parents.</p>
<p>30. And I wondered how they would react. They did in fact blame each other ... I remember ... even that evening when I told them they actually ... only lightly, it was not a terrible scene, but they made these half comments which said, "but it's ..." you know. They definitely did not</p>	<p>(30) Dia reflected anxiously on how her parents would react to her wish to move out of home. She recalls that they blamed each other subtly and Dia realised that they could not understand why she wanted to live on her own as this practice also went against the conventions of the time.</p>

<p>understand why I wanted to stay on my own because at that time you must know it was also not an okay thing to do.</p>	
<p>31. You see my sister did not do this. She stayed at home until she got married. So it was a foreign concept for them, I think.</p>	<p>(31) Dia recognises that she was breaking new ground as her sister had lived at home until she got married and she realises that her decision to leave home was an alien concept for her parents.</p>
<p>32. I cannot remember the comments but I think they felt ... that ... that there was ... You know, now that I think about it, maybe it was what worried each one about the other one's behaviour that they accepted had made me want to leave home. You know ... I ... they did not say [this] in so many words ... really discuss this in so many words. I can just remember that there were comments such as : "Yes, but if ...", you know, ... : "You also make it difficult", or something like that, you know ... and I think that they perhaps ... probably assumed that I experienced the other's behaviour with as much difficulty as they experienced it - you know, my mother and my father. I assume that my father would have thought, that is as I understand it now, that what my mother ... maybe ... the way in which my mother handled the situation and her subsequent behaviour, perhaps made it difficult ... for <i>me</i>, while in fact it was difficult for <i>him</i>. I don't think that he understood what was difficult for me. They definitely did not understand why I wanted to leave home</p>	<p>(32) Dia found it extremely traumatic to tell her parents of her decision to leave home. She realised that they could not understand her wish to separate and they blamed each other, assuming that the difficulties which they experienced in coping with each other's way of handling the loss were equally painful for Dia and were driving her away.</p>

<p>and it was <i>terribly, terribly</i> traumatic for me to say this ... to get myself so far as to say: “Now I am going!”</p>	
<p>33. Um... [it was traumatic] because I found it difficult to explain it to them ... um ...because they literally <i>smothered</i> me, you know, I did not have a chance to breathe because <i>then</i> I was the only focus. One day my brother-in-law said to me, “You will never get a husband if you stay” (laughs). That's not why I left but (laughs) he also ... in other words, what I think now is that he probably also experienced it ... that they are so ... You know, they were not aware of this. Certainly not, because they are the most dear, most supportive people you can get. But they did not have as much <i>insight</i> as one would hope for ... I think they could not get over it. No, no. I think that their needs were obviously considerably greater than their insight in ... into <i>my</i> situation. I am sure of that. That made it ... I must say ... I had to try and shake it off forcibly. Um...</p>	<p>(33) As the only child, Dia became her parents' sole focus, so much so that she felt suffocated, and it pained her deeply that she could not make them understand that she needed her own space. She was aware that her parents could not get over their loss: their neediness blurred their vision of her needs and Dia realised that she would forcefully have to cut herself free.</p>
<p>34. Still today there are unwritten rules that we will, more often than not, be together at Christmas. To tell the truth, I have only spent two Christmasses away from my parents... you know... and that is not ... my father is now deceased but (sighs) ... it ... it is the same feeling of ... you, you do not have ... you cannot explain why ... there's no explanation as to why you are not available, why you would like to do your own thing, that would soften it for them. So this is ...</p>	<p>(34) Although Dia left home, emotionally she still felt bound by family custom to spend special occasions with her parents. She realises that, even though her father is deceased, the feeling remains: there is no choice about where she will be on Christmas Day as nothing can soften the blow of her absence for her mother.</p>

<p>35. But after my marriage, for the first six months I was able to really cry about it for the first time and I could say to my husband it was <i>terrible</i> for me. You know, I...I...at that ... I ...I could ... you know, we... he's not one for speaking much but I could really verbalise ... It was ... you know perhaps ... one, two or three episodes where for five minutes I could say that and that was terrible for me. That was that! And that was enough for me. For me at that stage Then it was all right. Afterwards it was all right.</p>	<p>(35) In the relationship with her husband, Dia was finally able to acknowledge her intense sorrow and to openly express her grief. This occurred over a period of time and provided the necessary relief after which she felt more at peace.</p>
<p>36. But I retained a <i>tre-men-dous</i> anxiety about travelling by car to the sea... this year for the first time I realized ... you know, it's all right. I ... I ... you know afterwards it got so bad that I thought: "OK now we're at K., we've made it!"; "Now we're at B, we've made it!", you know ... that's how I travelled to the sea. It was ... it was very bad. And I ... these days I laugh at myself because I still think that you are just going to ... [have] a problem ... an accident, when you're on the main road. I immediately put my seat belt on whereas here I would forget. So I ... it clicked ... now there are certain little episodes ...</p>	<p>(36) The loss of her sister left Dia with severe anticipatory anxiety when travelling to the sea by car and only this year has she managed to overcome her fear. However, she realises that she still associates travelling on the highway with accidents and takes the necessary safety precautions.</p>
<p>37. We kept absolute contact with her husband and with...with... he re-married ... until a [certain] stage and ... then ... ag! The differences that he and I had never had anything to do with my ... my sister's death. I remember that we got into the car after the fellow told us and we</p>	<p>(37) The family maintained contact with her sister's husband even after he remarried and Dia's later conflicts with her brother-in-law were unrelated to her sister's death. From the outset, Dia and her family never blamed him for the death, accepting him as part of the grieving family. In fact her</p>

<p>rode a few kilometres, when my mother said to my father: “you will never blame that fellow”, and that was ... that was her attitude throughout. My ... my ... my father was really the more emotional one that could have [said]... you know: “You did not look after her well enough”, that sort of thing. My mother is the more logical one who ... you know realized, but, you know, to him she is just as important and he would ... at all costs he would ... you know for him it was <i>worse</i> than for anyone else.</p>	<p>mother recognised that his loss was as severe if not “worse” than that of anybody else.</p>
<p>38. No. Never. Never. Definitely never [felt that he was to blame]. If there is anything that I myself know is that she was the one that plucked at the steering wheel. Because I never felt that he drove too fast, or that he drove too slowly, but if he could have done anything better he would have. You know. He was <i>mad</i> about her. Definitely never, never, never that!</p>	<p>(38) Dia herself never apportioned any blame to her brother-in-law as he was a very consistent driver and she believes that he would have done his utmost to protect her sister. However, knowing her sister well, Dia was convinced that she might have plucked at the steering wheel as the car left the road.</p>
<p>39. Thereafter I often wondered how much he would have dominated her ... he can be emotionally hard and that’s what I often wondered about and often thought: “perhaps it’s all for the good.” You know, there were certain incidents with the ... the other woman when I thought: whew! If that were my sister, in all likelihood, I would not keep quiet. Um ... so I ... one feels differently in different situations, you know. I mean it’s bad at a stage and then something happens then you think, you know, perhaps ... um ... “It was better”, you know - you view it that way.</p>	<p>(39) Dia found that she experienced the loss differently in different situations. She vacillated between feeling that it was bad and then something would happen and she would view it in a different light - that perhaps it was for the “better.” The awareness of her brother-in-law’s unyielding nature influenced her perception; he might have come to dominate her sister and they also had no children.</p>

<p>So the ... they had no children so it was not ... um ...</p>	
<p>40. And with the ... with my marriage I must say that I began to miss her, but you know how it is at a wedding ... it is so ... more with the arrangements than with the ... but we never ... we were still too far apart at that age, that four - five years, and we were too different, that, she really was a pal to me. I realise that it would have come later.</p>	<p>(40) With her marriage, Dia missed her sister. Although she is aware that the missing was not based on the intimacy of their relationship as they were not really close at the time of her sister's death, she realises that the closeness would have come later.</p>
<p>41. Um ... frequently I wondered what the situation would have been once I had children, for example. I wondered how we would ... um ... how would the relationship have changed and ... when my parents began to get older I often wondered how ... you know, how she would have seen it. Um ... actually it could have been easier or more difficult, you know, there are always differences in the way you handle situations so there would definitely have been <i>great</i> differences. Also because the... her husband's a very difficult chap. My husband is a very calm person. He will ... he's actually not difficult. Not because I say so but that's the way people experience him. He's a very peaceful chap. He goes along with things and if he doesn't want to do something, he won't do it and he won't make a big fuss about it. So he gets away with things (laughs), in the sense of not doing things that are unacceptable to him.</p>	<p>(41) Looking to future possibilities and relationships, Dia often wondered what her world would have been like had her sister survived (once she had children, as their parents got older), and she recognises the dialectical paradox that it could have been either easier or more difficult, not only because of their marked differences but also because of the nature of their respective husbands.</p>
<p>42. Um ... um ... the ... situations that I'm</p>	<p>(42) At some point, Dia experienced a yearning</p>

<p>thinking about ... that I thought about the other night (after we had spoken on the phone) ... what was interesting was when I realised it. Yes. At one stage I... realised that my friends with sisters I sort of ... you know, “it’s very nice, [to have] the support” ... and then I thought of <i>my</i> sister and realised that it wouldn’t have been like that because we were too different. Um ... we would, yes, be there for each other, but we had no ... there would be little of doing things together. We simply did not do things in the same way. <i>But</i>, you know, as one grows older ... I don’t know. So I wondered about that and when my father died ... in the hospital, and so on. Then I realised that it probably would have been easier.</p>	<p>for a supportive sisterly relationship but, on reflection, realised that while she and her sister would have been “there” for each other and that this would have made caring for elderly parents easier, they were unlikely to have shared much because they were very different.</p>
<p>43. Last Monday I had an idea that I think that my sister would have supported her (i.e. mother) far better because they were much <i>closer</i> to each other in a way, but still I don’t know if <i>she</i> (mother) would have experienced it like that ... my mother ... I don’t know. Must ask her! (laughs). Funny, we don’t speak about such things (laughs). Isn’t it strange how you ... I don’t know when I see how my ... how <i>my</i> daughter ...</p>	<p>(43) Dia compares herself to her sister and assumes that she might have provided better support for her mother because they had a very close relationship but she has never verified this assumption and realises that she and her mother do not discuss emotional issues.</p>
<p>44. Oh yes. That is something else that I <i>now</i> realise that the anxiety that I had gradually built up of : Whew! You know, at some stage I will be alone. You know a husband is not really <i>family</i>. In the end he has a choice, you know, he has to be there or he doesn’t have to, and your sister <i>must</i></p>	<p>(44) Dia experienced a gradual but incremental anxiety about being left entirely on her own at some stage of her life and she realises that while a husband can choose to be there or not, a sister and a child <i>must</i> be there whether they want to be there or not.</p>

<p>be there, you know ... and your child ... Yes, yes. If she feels like going or not, she will still ... (laughs) ...</p>	
<p>45. But my daughter, I think, grew into that role ... of... you know, we are very, very close. We have the same sense of humour. We share a lot...we are also very different ... She is a “performer”, I would rather, please, stand behind the curtain (laughs) but she understands very well ... so that ... and sometimes she does things and I really thought hard when she ... when she said that she wanted to study music, whether I tried, you know, [to influence her]... That was not the case at all. I told her that I refuse. She could not take music ... when she was at school. Um ... because we had a session, you know, when she was little and she didn’t want to practise and when she got to Standard six then she wanted to again. Then I said, “No, I’m sorry. You’ve had your chance, now it’s over!” But then after a while...meantime, I hoped that she would want to because she is so musical ... I can see that the child herself ... knows its ... its ... and then really she came back again and said, “No, really.” She really wants to. Then I said: “Okay, if your marks remain the same and I don’t have to say to you go and practise.” And after that I never had to tell her to go and practise. So I managed to sort that out, that I did not try to [push her] into a direction ... um ... I actually discouraged her. Said to her: “You must think very carefully. One should not make</p>	<p>(45) Dia realises that her developing relationship with her daughter filled the void created by the absence of her sister and the awareness of the possibility that her daughter could become a substitute caused some inner conflict particularly when her daughter indicated that she wanted to pursue the same field of interest as her deceased aunt. Dia made a conscious effort to ensure that she had not influenced her daughter.</p>

<p>your hobby your career”, because she’s not terribly interested in teaching.</p>	
<p>46. But then again ... you know, even the music ... my sister and I ... she used to sight-read. Always did what the book said. I looked at the book and then I ... yes, okay, I think it sounds like that and then I did my thing, you know, and clearly did not get as far ... so her ... way is ... (laughs) ... yes... She was very willing to ...</p>	<p>(46) The differences between Dia and her sister were considerable and revealed themselves even in their approach to mutual interests (music): Dia spontaneous and free, her sister controlled and correct. She realises that her sister’ way of doing things was more effective and successful.</p>
<p>47. I think the ... the ... your ... your ... the personality differences, I think, the position in the family, I would say is very important. And then I think the age when it happens ... you know, when both are still in the home, then it’s a day-to-day ... And it was almost ... how we felt because we had a holiday with them. So that in itself, just the return home, was again a bit of a separation because they were married for such a short time ...</p>	<p>(47) Dia believes that apart from the personality differences and the sibling’s position in the family, the age at which the loss occurs is an important variable in how one experiences the loss. For her, spending time on holiday with her newly married sister was reminiscent of earlier times when they shared the same space and had daily contact with each other and the return home was experienced as another separation.</p>
<p>48. ...And ... um ... there was something else that I thought of... I think there’s ... there are apparently bonds between siblings, you know. If there is more than one in the home then I think it is ... um ... you know, because ... because we always did things together with the cousins, also with the sister’s children, they were the big ones and we were the little ones so it means that ... I had a cousin who was just as old as I was and a younger cousin. Those are the two who are dead. And the older sister and the one who was exactly the same age as my sister, they were</p>	<p>(48) Dia acknowledges the existence of sibling bonds but is aware that when there is a significant age gap between brothers and sisters, family peers (cousins) who have regular contact may come to form closer bonds. In her situation, Dia played more with same age cousins than with her sister and the sibling attachment was not a very close one.</p>

<p>always together. So we were the little ones. So we ... the play always... when they visited I played with the boys and she with her ... so even there, you know, there ... I think we ...</p>	
<p>49. She was the elder sister with a sense of responsibility... it was a responsibility because she was so afraid of making a mistake. Which of course left me more free ... then I made a mistake, you know! So ... I mean, you know ... if we ever had conflict it was about <i>that</i> ... because she tried to stop me because I...provoked her. Because ... well it was fascinating when she became <i>panicky</i> because I wanted to do something that ... look I'm talking on a small scale ... we were extremely civilised little girls, you know. We never ... (laughs) ... so what I am saying is very subtle ... I only want to explain what the situation was (like).</p>	<p>(49) Dia perceived her elder sister as being “the responsible one” and while this allowed Dia more freedom, the responsible-irresponsible dialectic became a minor source of conflict between them as her sister would become agitated and try to inhibit Dia's daring and frequently provocative behaviour.</p>
<p>50. My ... my grandmother would say, for example: “She was not made for this world”, and that was what it was about. She was very different. She ... she ... I think as a little one ... When she was very little she had asthma now and then. So I think she was very protected. Not that I experienced it that way. I was on my own mission, I think ... I was too small and stupid.</p>	<p>(50) Although Dia is aware that as a little girl her sister was regarded as very precious and fragile and that she was treated with special care by family members, Dia believes that she (Dia) was too young to be affected by this preferential treatment of her sister.</p>
<p>51. Yes, and if you had [asked] me these same [questions] ... [if I were in] the same situation (i.e. the interview) five years after her death I would have probably [mentioned] totally different things ... I</p>	<p>(51) Dia reflects that had she been interviewed shortly after her sister's death (5 years after the loss) she may have given totally different responses but she is not convinced of this.</p>

<p>don't know ... probably [have responded] very differently...because... the ... the ... No ...</p>	
<p>52. Perhaps because I ... I was always afraid how it would be if we ... it really is a thing that a person really wonders what she would be like now. Because you remember her with her young ... everything, you know, and if I have to think of how my personality has changed ... maybe not totally ... (laughs) but ... very, very...much more patient, much less ... you know. I can imagine that she probably [would have] much more self confidence ... you know ... much more assertive even ... would have been more easily assertive because for me it was ... Interestingly enough, I remember that I could <i>never</i> see her as a school teacher who could cope with a whole class full of children. Because <i>I</i> say school children are, for me, very threatening to have to cope with. You know students are a different matter but school children always remain, for me ... and I can remember that I wondered: "How on earth!" And she carried on. Okay. Good. They were smaller classes because it was music but, on the other hand, it was class music and not everyone enjoyed it. So it is a ... and I ... I can't remember that she ever complained that it was unmanageable for her. That is why I, you know, had the feeling that if she wanted to cope, she would.</p>	<p>(52) Dia realises that her image of her sister remains frozen and she often wonders how her personality would have evolved and what she would have been like in the present. Dia realises that her sister would have changed with time, just as Dia herself has changed, but she is also aware that even when her sister was alive she had surprised Dia by revealing that she was capable of more than Dia assumed.</p>
<p>53. She was definitely much stronger and I</p>	<p>(53) Although Dia is aware that her sister's</p>

<p>know that ... that I never underestimate little people and I think I base that on her and then later on X (friend) ... and my mother. My mother is very small. Small, small, small “a little breath” and I know that you must not underestimate little people (laughs): Physically timid doesn’t mean anything! (laughs)... (Still laughing) Now that I think about it, she has grown in my mind (consciousness). Oh, but I think you [also] make assumptions. And quietish people ... you should also not underestimate. It is also... I think basically that was based on my knowledge of her strength ... I think.</p>	<p>remembered image may have grown in her imagination, she believes that, based predominantly on her experience of her sister’s underlying strength, she has learned something very valuable, i.e. never to make assumptions about, or to underestimate, small and quiet people.</p>
<p>54. But now, there is really tremendous support in the family and circle of friends for my parents and for me. I think it is also a very ... very important thing.</p>	<p>(54) Dia recognises the value of the support of others (family and circle of friends) that rallied around her and her parents and she believes that this was very significant in her loss experience.</p>
<p>55. Yes, this friend of my mother’s ... she’s been dead for a year and I had a tremendously special feeling for her... actually what happened is her parents ... I ... um ... my father’s mother was still alive, that is grandmother X and that was the only grandmother or grandfather that we knew, but <i>this</i> friend’s parents at one stage decided ... the friend and the two sisters, our three families were always together. But she was never married and she had these two parents. And they ... were sort of for all of us, our grandmother and grandfather but of the whole lot they, for some or other reason, apparently decided that I was their</p>	<p>(55) Dia experienced the presence of a special family friend and her repeated and active support, more in terms of “doing” rather than “talking” as particularly valuable and has come to realise the significance of unconditional friendship in her experience of the loss of her sister.</p>

<p>grandchild. So it was ... everyone accepted this, there was never any problem that I noticed. So she ... to a certain extent we shared her parents, you know, something the others ... that the other cousins did not do. And she was the type of personality that ... if there was a <i>crisis</i> then she was there. She never really ... I think, yes, you know, I think she was really a <i>mother</i> to me ... an <i>idol</i> in a way ... because she never spoke about things, but she <i>acted</i> ... she was <i>there</i>, you know ... she was always ... that's what she taught me about friendship, that you cannot ... that you will not easily ... or you don't find this in many people ... that <i>unconditional</i> friendship. So she would immediately drop everything and say to her sister: "I'm going. You and your husband travel together." And obviously they came along to B. and they were with us that ... that week [after the accident] ... those few days, I don't think it was a whole week. And it was like ... you know they left immediately which was wonderful. And this happened <i>repeatedly</i> you know. So that support was there and it was very valuable.</p>	
<p>56. So from my side it took the burden from me because I felt, you know, now, in a way, I must carry these people (i.e. parents). They did not have the energy really to ... and because of the nature of my personality they ... I did not ask much ... I actually asked them to leave me alone. You know...because they can carry</p>	<p>(56) In the awareness that her parents did not have the strength to cope, Dia appreciated the support of others that relieved her of having to sustain her parents. She, herself, made few demands on them, in effect she wanted time alone to deal with her own loss.</p>

<p>on and cope with their problem and I coped with mine ...</p>	
<p>57. Very little really [i.e. support for herself]. Okay, no...we did make the arrangements together and that sort of thing but they never, <i>never</i> asked how one felt about it. <i>Mercifully</i> not ... It would have been very bad. But on the other hand, my mother was not a great talker and my father was not ... um ... was not at all analytical in the sense of: "Come let's think how we feel about this matter." You just feel, you know. You don't wonder why you feel.</p>	<p>(57) Although Dia was involved with all the arrangements after her sister's death, others, taking their cue from the grieving family, never asked how they felt for which Dia was extremely grateful as this relieved her of the pain of discussion.</p>
<p>58. He (father) was a lovable person ... the day when he died I realised ... that the one person who <i>un-con-di-tio-nally</i> always ... you know it is the stupidest thing ... would always take my side and look for excuses for me, is no longer there (laughs). My mother would ... um ... first sort everything out. First ... first find out whose fault it was ... [she would] always think <i>I</i> was at fault, "Because I know my children well!" (laughs). But she is absolutely for ... she was ... you know : "Sort the thing out." She could ... You get the picture of how difficult it was for those two and I felt that I stood in the middle. And I think if there had been other children, perhaps it would have been different ... handled differently ... (thoughtful). I ...</p>	<p>(58) Dia felt trapped between her mother and father whose marked personality differences created difficulties for them in coping with their grief and Dia becomes aware that if there had been other children it may have been possible to handle the loss differently.</p>
<p>59. When ... my cousins died (after they were married) and the way in which her sister handled it, my mother's sister handled it, and the way in which she (Dia's mother)</p>	<p>(59) Based on her experience of subsequent losses within the extended family, Dia becomes aware that different families cope with loss very differently and she realises</p>

<p>handled it, was totally different. Although, not so much the two sisters as the two <i>families</i>. But then the children were <i>older</i>, you know. I think that makes a <i>big</i> difference. Well, you know, she (i.e. Dia's sister) was ... she was just out of the house when she died and the cousins died ... the older one ... we were about forty two, forty three or thereabout and the younger fellow ... he was about five years younger than us and he was in his late thirties, but they both had families with children and had been out of the house for quite a long time ... although no, I lie. The younger cousin was not out of the house. My mother's sister still stayed with them in the house. They had a flatlet ... her husband was dead at that stage ... so they ... yes, actually they were together daily. But it was striking to me how the personality of the person ... all the people in the family ... their personalities, especially the parents, in the family, their way of handling it largely determines how <i>you</i> will experience it and the...and the ...</p>	<p>that, apart from the age at which a child dies, the personalities of the parents and their way of handling their grief significantly influence the surviving sibling's experience of loss.</p>
<p>60. Okay, how you cope with it is certainly your affair, but...but the demands that are made on you, apart from the fact that your brother or sister is dead...the immediate demands...That is determined by the personalities of the other people in the family ... and this can be even more taxing than the fact that you have suffered a loss, you know. That was something that I realised afterwards ... <i>That</i> was for me the thing that stood out. I</p>	<p>(60) Although Dia accepts that every sibling will cope with the loss in an individual way, she realises that other family members have their own characteristic ways of coping with the loss and this placed immediate demands on her to cope in the same way as her parents did. In retrospect, this stood out as even more burdensome than her actual loss; the experience became doubly stressful.</p>

<p>think ... I think that nobody can say that my parents were, you know, outrageously this or that. It was just that I had to cope with ... I must cope in the way that they cope ... and that was a <i>double</i> thing for me. You know like ... imagine that your son has a ... loses a girlfriend. You cope with it the way that <i>he's</i> coping with it ... even if she was a lovely person that you knew. It was ... yes, you know, this happened over and over and over again...</p>	
<p>61. Oh, absolutely (she felt the pain of her parents). Yes, yes. And it places <i>demands</i> on you ... and I assume that if there are more children then the children could half <i>understand</i> each other, you know, and almost jointly bear the (burden)that thing of : “Let us help mom and dad cope.” And my mother and father, I think, are not ... they are not extremely ... we are a very civilized family (laughs) ... so, you know, if I speak of them ... it is it is very subtle (laughs) ... but it did It did place demands on <i>me</i>.</p>	<p>(61) Dia experienced her parents’ pain as a subtle demand from which she could not turn away and she assumes that it would have lightened the load if there had been other siblings who could have shared the responsibility of helping parents to cope.</p>
<p>62. And I finished (ie. studies)... It (the death) was in July in my fourth year ... and I finished in December. I got work in J but I commuted. So I still lived at home.</p>	<p>(62) Although Dia started working in a city quite far from home, she continued living at home and commuted daily.</p>
<p>63. And that October ... <i>that</i> was the first thing. The very same friend of whom I spoke earlier on and I decided to go overseas. Then the rand was very strong. It was seventy cents to the dollar. No the <i>dollar</i> was seventy cents to the rand. So it was ... it was something that we very much wanted to do and she was already</p>	<p>(63) Dia felt her parents’ ever-increasing “holding on” and she wanted to escape from their intense embrace but while she welcomed the opportunity for some space between herself and her parents, she also realised that a separation would be extremely painful for them. Despite her ambivalence, Dia succeeded in breaking</p>

<p>there. Just to get away for those three months was ... there were no fixed addresses and it was certainly very bad for them (i.e. parents) but for me it was ... I just wanted to get away a little from the clinging because the holding on became more intense. And then I came back ... in December, I think ... and moved into a flat. I often wondered if I was not the only child, I am sure that the situation would have been easier.</p>	<p>away but she is convinced that this would have been easier had she not been the only child.</p>
<p>64. I often wondered how ... how it would have been if she had been there and, as I say (there would have been) many positives and many negatives. I realise that there may have been a lot of conflict because there would be two families which may(be) ... you know, our family... my husband and I and the children would have had to cope with her (sister) and her husband ... the brother-in-law ...</p>	<p>(64) Dia often reflected on the future and wondered how it would have been had her sister not died. She realises that there would have been positive and negative aspects; viewed negatively, there may have been considerable conflict between Dia and her new family, and her sister and her husband</p>
<p>65. It is interesting when things started going terribly wrong between him and his second wife - she had a small problem with drugs and things, you know. No, not “drugs” ... “depression drugs?” ... What do you call them? “Medication”, yes, that’s it! And then they were divorced and he’s remarried now. And now ... here towards the end of last year, the one cousin who is just as old as my sister was... her husband ... they were all together in matric ... I am talking about my brother-in-law and my sister and the cousin and her husband ... it was a group that I knew very well ... that everyone ...</p>	<p>(65) Dia became increasingly aware of her brother-in-law’s later attachment difficulties and was struck by how similar his third wife was to her deceased sister. She realised that he had not resolved his grief over the loss.</p>

<p>you know, it was a well known group ... to each other ... then her husband died and it was ... how can I say ... almost like a reunion. You know, then all the friends were back. And then it struck me <i>again</i> how much this third wife ... looked like my sister - small and dark and fine and...you know... it was strange.</p>	
<p>66. ...It was interesting to me just after the ... after the accident, I often went ... I had to ... I went to him between classes and helped him with exercises and so on, but I knew that for him (the visits) revolved around <i>speaking</i>, you know. It was awful for him. He was bedridden for a long time. He had a fracture that gave many problems. Um ... so it was also a ... it was also someone ... because he and I were actually friends, I had to almost support him as well. You know, this was also ... also another ... another situation.</p>	<p>(66) After the accident, Dia was aware of her brother-in-law's psychic pain and his need to speak about the loss and she experienced a sense of responsibility to sustain him emotionally as well. This was an additional stress for her.</p>
<p>67. That's the way <i>I</i> experienced it, you know and, I think, because of the nature of my personality. I cannot cope ... I cannot make as if I...or, I cannot <i>give in</i>... "<i>admit</i>" that's the word. I cannot, not ... I cannot, not cope because as soon as I do this, then I collapse completely ... you know. For a while I must ... my ... my ... my <i>mind</i> must take over rather than my emotions. I mean ... I must <i>think</i> myself through this ... yes, I think, come through this cognitively. Um ... and I think this was part of the process too ... it was bad, I could not cope with it immediately. I would, in any event, not have been able to</p>	<p>(67) Internally Dia experienced the pain of her loss but she could not submit to her grief or acknowledge that she was hurting for fear of breaking down. She needed time to reflect and to work through the loss on a cognitive rather than emotional level before she could talk about it with anybody. She realises that one's individual personality influences the grief process.</p>

<p>talk about it with anybody at that stage. And I think <i>there</i> it would also differ a lot ... because the need which ... you know, the ... the personality will determine what your needs are.</p>	
<p>68. What was bad about the first experiences of someone (around you) close to you who has died, I think the ... the grandfather ... the friend's father whom I called grandfather ... his (death) was at that stage the only one in my family that I had ever experienced and then the friend's sister. She also died in a motor accident ... and I think the suddenness of it ... that's the other thing that I have thought about ... um ... the manner in which they die ... is ... um ... will also certainly make a difference. You know, if a person is sick for a long time, then it is something completely different ... to this unexpected ... especially when it is accompanied by violence, it can be even more awful, you know.</p>	<p>(68) Although Dia's first encounter with death (grandfather) was painful, she realises that the experience of loss to a sudden and violent death is qualitatively different and can be even more awful than the loss of someone who has been ill for a long time.</p>
<p>69. You know that I always said that I ... I ... I ... and I definitely felt it ... I honestly felt : "Why not ... why her and not me?". I mean I was not in a relationship. I was not married. I was almost disposable at that stage because it wouldn't have been so bad for everybody ... um ... naturally I'm not so stupid ... (laughs) ... it would have been bad (laughs) ... obviously ... so what I mean is that they would have felt bad for a time, you know ... nobody would have ... they became much more realistic later on. Remember that I once</p>	<p>(69) Dia constantly sought answers to the question: "Why her and not me?" and felt guilty that she had survived while her sister had died. By comparing her life at that time with that of her sister, she concludes that her death would have been less devastating as fewer people would have been affected and she assumes that her loss would not have been as deeply mourned.</p>

<p>said to them: “No wait a bit. Now you are going overboard.” But I really felt ... if I ever felt in the least bit guilty, I felt guilty because it was not me, because she had just got married, just qualified. I wasn’t sure what I wanted to study ... nobody ... or what work I wanted to do ... if I wanted to do that sort of work. I was not in a relationship that was going anywhere, so, you know ... it would simply have been logical. I think she ... she was perhaps ... so that was the only thing that I thought of, you know. I wouldn’t say that I really felt guilty ... how shall I describe it ... but I know that I had such thoughts ... which ... you know if I had to make the plans, I would have made them like this, you know (laughter).</p>	
<p>70. And that was another thing ... religion ... Fortunately at one point I got as far as to realise that I <i>was</i> allowed to be angry. I <i>could</i> but then I should not gossip about God, I had to tell Him that. That was a great relief. That experience that, okay you may be angry but then you do not turn away and speak behind [God’s back] ... the ... the ...the ... who ... who ... who has the power, has done the wrong thing and therefore I hate Him, and things like that. You know. Fortunately I realised that you could ... and those are things that I had to [work out] for myself ... you know ... I realise I would not have accepted anything like that from anyone else. It would not have been a solution for me to hear this from someone else. Like at</p>	<p>(70) As a Christian, Dia experienced intense anger towards God and through her spiritual struggle she realised that she was allowed to be angry provided she could say this directly to God and ask Him to help her to cope. This was a personal solution which evolved over time and Dia realises that she would not have accepted this had it come from somebody else.</p>

<p>the funeral, you know, it would not ... but because I came to this <i>myself</i>, it was ... yes ... yes ... it also did not happen immediately. For a long time I felt, yes, I'm annoyed and it's a very stupid thing to let happen. It was unnecessary. Look at how many lives have been messed up and people who ... but for me it was a very, very big relief to realise that I may be angry as long as I could say this <i>directly</i>, that: "I am angry, help me sort it out." I think it was okay for me ... now I can cope. It was for me ...</p>	
<p>71. And those who talk a great deal of religion ... for me it is a fact ... um ... it is a given, you know, and all these terribly emotional things about religion are terrible for me. I don't want to know anything about it. For me it was very bad ... and you don't belabour someone else with religion ... you ... if you cannot influence the person with how you handle your life ... then you are not a good ambassador sort of (laughs). So ...</p>	<p>(71) Dia rejected the abstract and emotional ideas of others who attempted to console her with religious talk. For her the loss was a lived reality, a "given", which was very painful and she felt that religious persuasion was not helpful.</p>
<p>72. I'm not saying these things because I am a religious-speaking person. Not at all. Anything but! But ... I remember that I ... um, [it is] Job hey? [Yes], Job. There's a stage when ... when ... old ... old ... Job complains, complains, complains and he and his pals sit and moan, then ...then ... God puts things together and He says to him, "Man you keep quiet and let me tell you about all the things that I've done: Can you do <i>this</i>, can you do <i>this</i>? Have you done <i>this</i>, have you ever done <i>this</i> ...?"</p>	<p>(72) Dia's perception of God as the Ultimate Planner, based on her reading of a biblical story, strikes a chord in her because of her passion for planning and she develops a sudden insight and awareness that there are plans better than she can visualise or conceptualise. She comes to accept that there is a Higher Hand in these things and to entrust God with the planning of her life.</p>

<p>Actually you're stupid. You don't know anything. You don't make any plans. I make better plans!" (laughs). And for me, you know, that was what made me understand ... so I accept that there is someone who can plan and I am...I... I'm absolutely amazed by ... um ... planning. I am fanatical about planning (laughs). So if someone can make provision for things so that this whole thing resulted in a whole subtle chain of how things are connected ... if someone can conceptualise this, then I must trust Him with the planning of my life. This is something that clicked with me. So the accusation that I had in that respect has become for me ... good ... "I know better. I don't have to explain to you why I did this but I know better", and I must accept it like that. So for me it was a ...</p>	
<p>73. And I think it was ... at that stage, twenty-one, um ... is also a time that you have not sorted yourself out properly in that respect. You are emotional, perhaps very ... you know, this school religion can actually go terribly overboard ... it's ... it's ... almost a mass ... hysteria. And I don't want to shoot it down, not at all. For many children it is of great value but one must see how long it lasts, you know, that's how I feel about the matter. And um ... That's it. It was a test. It was very easy at a Christian Student Society camp to say : "Yes, I ... I ... wonderful. The Lord is everything!", but when you find yourself <i>in</i> such a situation then it is a</p>	<p>(73) In her quest to find answers to the loss, Dia arrives at an understanding of the difference between the unquestioning acceptance of the easy and ready-made prescriptions of organised religion and the harsh and concrete reality of being-with-loss. This prompts her to test previously held religious assumptions and to clarify her own personal beliefs.</p>

<p>double-take... of <i>really</i> being in such a situation to ... with me it went very well (i.e. with the Christian Students' Society). We never had problems...you know it was not really wonderful but it was always very well organised and everything went well and so on ... so that was the first ... as I say with the friend's sister and my [sister's death], because their deaths were only six months apart it was almost one thing ... in this ... in this ... in this respect ... in that respect of: "Why?", you know ... and to deal with it. You are half involved in working through it when the second one occurs and you have to deal with that as well. And from primary school days we were very, very close and also the families knew each other. You must realise that the parents ... the sister that died was a friend of my eldest cousin ... my mother's sister's eldest daughter. So it was all ... like intermarriage (interrelated) but it was (laughs) ... I mean ... and we stayed close to each other, all of us. It was actually a community that were involved with each other.</p>	
<p>74. It really helped that I had my own time ... that I could withdraw and that was the greatest help ... and ... um, this friend who had the same experience. I think those two ... I think it was really my salvation that I could ... um ... that I was not forced to ... to ... experience this <i>together</i> with the family ... you know ... or to work through it together ... did not</p>	<p>(74) Dia wanted to deal with her grief in her own way and in her own time and felt grateful that she had time alone, that she could withdraw and was not compelled to work through the loss with her family. She believes that having the opportunity to do this and the support of a friend who had had a similar experience, helped her to survive this difficult period.</p>

<p>have to work through it together, that I could do it by myself ... and ...</p>	
<p>75. ... and maybe that I ... that I immediately had to deal with a major task (thesis) and there where I felt the most comfortable, you know ...could continue. I ... I ... I ... analyse and reflect much more easily than I am able to work through ... than what I can emotionally acknowledge and work through. So I think I ... you know, those were the circumstances that resulted in ... yes, I could keep myself busy. I had an objective and you must leave me alone because I am ... busy ... so everyone left me alone. The door of my room was closed and they left me alone because I was busy ... and I think in the process of finishing the thesis I ... (long pause) ... But I still found time for myself and the storm outside ... uh ... uh ... and I didn't have to see it all ... and I was satisfied that they had enough support because they had ... people close to ... to each other ... and to them, they had there ... (suddenly very thoughtful)</p>	<p>(75) Dia could not deal with her emotions immediately and having an academic task to complete gave her time alone to work on her project while still being able to reflect on her loss. Comfortable in the knowledge that her parents had adequate external support, Dia kept herself occupied, legitimately closing her door against the “storm outside.”</p>
<p>76. I ... I ... just wondered, if it were a younger brother or sister how one would then have handled it ... or if you were the eldest and the middle one should die ... and perhaps you had to help with the younger one. I think all those things ... you know, then the younger one would be your responsibility. That would have been gall to me ... because my parents had their friends, you know, they had people close to them ... It is really clear that the</p>	<p>(76) Dia realises that while her parents had no energy to cope with any additional demands, they at least had external support. Speculating on a different family constellation, she feels relieved that she did not have younger siblings for whom she would have had to assume responsibility.</p>

<p>parents have no energy left over ...</p>	
<p>77. I ... look, I don't say that they were not interested in what I was doing ... that's how <i>I</i> experienced it. Perhaps <i>I pushed them away</i>. You know, perhaps they got the message loud and clear: "don't bother me", I don't know. We never really spoke about it. But there was definitely the ... the ... for me the <i>greatest</i> help was that I had time, that I was not, you know, sucked in. That would have been really terrible.</p>	<p>(77) Although Dia experienced her grieving parents as not actively involved in her activities, she suspects that she may have distanced herself from them for fear of being overwhelmed by the family grief. She still feels that having time alone, not being sucked into the family grief, was for her the greatest help.</p>
<p>78. And you know for me ... the fact that my sister was who she was, that for me was very easy because it really ... very often I could console myself that she would, in any case, have struggled to cope with all the difficult things [of life]. And actually that she had lived the best part of her life ... and she was married, she had that experience. So, you know, from then on, I think, only the more difficult things come. It was nice to think ... You know how you feel when you are twenty-one. Marriage is the ultimate - never again will anything ... so wonderful ever happen again. And ... I thought: "Wow, you know. She was ... she was not cheated!" (laughs). A person almost feels these very young people, you know, they really have not yet had the experience of ... it can be a wonderful union ... Oh yes, one seeks such things. Thereafter I often...very often...very often realised that she was sort of spared</p>	<p>(78) Dia's awareness of her sister's gentle nature facilitated acceptance of the loss as she realised that her sister would not have coped well with the hardships of life. Although she is aware that one seeks comfort, Dia also often consoled herself with the thought that her sister had not been deprived of the joy of marriage and that she had, in effect, enjoyed the best part of life.</p>
<p>79. [She was spared of having to go through what Dia experienced]. Yes. It would</p>	<p>(79) Dia acknowledges that it would have been painful for her sister to have experienced</p>

<p>surely also have been bad ... not that I thought that it would (laughs) have been the biggest problem. Um... yes, definitely.</p>	<p>the loss of a sibling but had not considered her own death as the most significant hardship that could have confronted her sister had she survived.</p>
<p>80. Mm ... [she was dependent]. I think it was a sort of immediate dependency in the situation but I don't think ... she trusted me enough ... I think I was a bit unpredictable. Um, in the sense of ... (laughs) ... you know we were so different ... not that it was really that, but I think ... I was prepared to tackle things that she was not... So I don't think she would have ... you know, she ... she ... she would have entrusted her life to me. I was in all likelihood <i>too irresponsible</i> for her at that stage and I did things that were probably unacceptable to her. You know took chances - in <i>her book</i>, took chances. Which did not ... I was not a ... but she was really ... um ... not adventurous (laughs). She was not very daring. Not at all. She would <i>never</i> go overseas for three months after she had studied without knowing exactly where she was going, you know, to places, you know, to people. She would have gone to visit, sure, but she wouldn't have gone and taken a chance because at that time people did not do it so often and nowadays there's nothing strange about it. But at that time it was really altogether ... you know, you did what the American books said you had to do, there was no one really to find out. It was...</p>	<p>(80) Dia repeats that she and her sister were very different and while her sister depended on her in certain situations, Dia believes that she did not fully trust her because of her perception that Dia was unpredictable and even <i>irresponsible</i> at that stage.</p>
<p>81. Yes (that was the way she remembered</p>	<p>(81) Although Dia does not want to be</p>

<p>her sister) and that is why I wonder if there had been more brothers and sisters how one would have ... you know ... if it would have been more supportive or more of a burden ... (thoughtful/concerned) ... I don't want it to sound as if I considered it to be a tremendous responsibility but it is just a thing that happens around you and you see people around you struggling, you know, and this does not make your task actually so much easier.</p>	<p>perceived as a victim weighed down by heavy responsibility, she realises that experiencing the struggle of others around her made her task that much more difficult and she often wondered whether having other siblings would have been a source of support or an additional responsibility (burden).</p>
<p>82. Yes. Yes (could share her loss experience with her husband). Then I could let go ... And ... and ... I had the emotional trust. Um ... and he is the type of guy who wouldn't be upset with it, you know... so he ...it made me think that I ... it's not ... rather I think, I knew I could say as much as I wanted to (say). He would not insist ... [that I tell more].</p>	<p>(82) In the trust relationship with her husband, Dia was finally able to let go and express her emotions. She felt confident that he would not be upset by her grief and that she could reveal as much or as little as she wanted to without fear that he would insist that she disclose more.</p>

Table II

Participant 2: Dia

Constituents of the Individual Situated Structure of Sibling Loss

1. The Sibling Attachment (1,2,46,48,49,80)

Dia recalls the personality differences between herself and her sister as they were growing up: Dia more daring, apparently fearless, independent, spontaneous, and free; her sister, not taking chances, fearful and seeking constant affirmation, controlled, correct and responsible. Although Dia experienced some impatience, she knew almost intuitively that her sister was stronger than she appeared to be and, in retrospect, she realises that by assuming these roles both their needs were met in a mutually satisfying way. When they were children, Dia perceived her elder sister as being “the responsible one” and while this allowed Dia more freedom, the responsible-irresponsible dialectic became a minor source of conflict between them as her sister would become agitated and try to inhibit Dia’s daring and frequently provocative behaviour.

While Dia is aware of the existence of sibling bonds, the 4 year age gap and the marked personality differences between herself and her sister kept them separate. Even as children, they both formed closer bonds with other family peers (cousins) with whom they had regular contact. Dia and her sister played more with same-age cousins than with each other and the *sibling attachment* was not a very close one. Dia felt that they never became friends in the sense of sharing confidences and doing things together. Yet her sister was very much an integral part of Dia’s world and, after her death, her sister’s remembered image increases in dimension. She realises that the closeness would have come later.

2. Separation: (3,4,5,47)

The first major separation from her sibling occurred when her sister married. Although Dia clashed with her brother-in-law on minor issues, generally she got on well with him and this in no way affected the sibling relationship. Dia and her parents were briefly reunited on holiday with her sister before her sister’s husband joined them for a few days and then they separated again for the journey home. For Dia, spending time on holiday with her newly married sister was reminiscent of earlier times when they shared the same space and had daily contact with each other and the return home was experienced as another separation. Her death, on the journey home, was a tremendous shock and the final separation. Dia’s sister was married for only one-and-a-half years when she was killed in a motor vehicle accident.

3. Blame: (6,37,38)

Her sister's death was instant and unexpected. Although the family suspected that her sister's husband might have fallen asleep at the steering wheel, Dia and her family never *blamed* him for the death, accepting him as part of the grieving family whose loss was as severe if not "worse" than for anybody else. Dia's later conflicts with her brother-in-law were unrelated to her sister's death and she herself never apportioned any blame to him as she believed that he was a very consistent driver and she realised that he would have done his utmost to protect her sister. If anything, Dia felt convinced that her sister, who she knew was inclined to panic in a crisis, might have pulled at the steering wheel as the car left the road.

4. Parents' Grief: (7, 15,18, 19,20,21,22,23,24,26,27,34,50,58,59,60,61)

- *Awareness of parents' pain: (7, 15,18)*

On receiving news of the accident, Dia was immediately aware of her *parents' pain* and her main concern as the family travelled to the mortuary to identify her sister's body was the horror of it for her parents. Later she realises that, of all the people affected by the loss, her parents remained her greatest concern and for a long time after the funeral, their way of dealing with the loss became a source of tremendous emotional stress for Dia.

- *Idealisation: (19,50)*

Dia was aware of her sister's many appealing and lovable qualities, and was also aware that the family regarded her as very special, precious and "not of this world", but she believed that she (Dia) was too young to be affected by this preferential treatment of her sister. However, after her sister's death, her parents' preoccupation with their deceased child and their tendency to *idealise* her annoyed Dia. She felt irritated, not by the lack of her parents' attention but by their apparent distortion of the facts which prompted her to confront them, saying, "You're remembering incorrectly!" Later her parents did become more realistic.

- *Rituals and Anniversaries: (20,26,27,34)*

Dia dreaded and experienced great difficulty with the family's regular visits to the cemetery and withdrew from this *ritual*, preferring to remember her sister in her mind. She also recalls with horror the emotional intensity of the first Christmas and the first birthday after the death and to this day she senses the expectation within the family that *anniversary dates* are openly acknowledged and jointly observed. Although Dia has never forgotten her sister's birthday or the day on which she died and would prefer a quiet time on her own, she is aware that relationships become strained if she fails to "celebrate" these occasions with her parents. In the awareness of her parents' intense pain, Dia still feels bound to spend special occasions with them. Her compassion for her parents and her quest to

understand what it means to lose a child, continues to influence Dia and she has spent only two Christmasses apart from her family of origin. She is aware that even though her father is now deceased the feeling remains: nothing can soften the blow of her absence for her mother.

- *Divergent ways of coping with the loss: (21,22,23,24,58)*

Dia was painfully aware of her *parents' divergent ways of coping with their loss* and the emerging subtle conflict that created difficulties for them and weakened their relationship. Her father constantly wanted to speak about the loss while her mother preferred to keep her feelings private. While Dia preferred to cope with her grief in the same way as her mother, i.e. privately, she felt trapped between her parents whose marked personality differences created difficulties in coping with their grief. Aware of her parents' conflicting needs (concealing-revealing) feelings, Dia realised that they were unable to support each other. This was the most stressful aspect of the loss experience for her. Dia herself was not ready to deal openly with her sister's death and by trying to draw her out to speak about her feelings, her father unwittingly created situations that threatened her emotionally. She felt annoyed and wanted to escape but at the same time felt a deep compassion for her father and realised how painful the loss was for both of her parents. In retrospect, Dia realises that if there had been other children, the loss experience might have been handled differently and consequently been less stressful for everyone.

- *Demand to grieve in the same way as parents: (59,60,61)*

Based on her experience of subsequent losses within the extended family, Dia becomes aware that different families cope very differently with loss. She realises that the personality differences between her parents and their way of handling their grief significantly influenced her experience of the loss of her sibling. Although Dia accepts that grieving is an individual matter, she realises that family members have their own characteristic ways of coping with their grief. She experienced the expectation that she cope in the *same way as her parents* as an immediate *demand*. In retrospect, this stood out as even more burdensome than her actual loss. The experience became doubly stressful. Her parents' grief became a subtle demand from which she could not turn away and the sense of responsibility weighed heavily on her. She assumes that it would have lightened the load if there had been other siblings who could have shared the responsibility of helping parents cope with their loss.

5. The Burden of Responsibility: (9,14,65,66,67,76,81)

In addition to her own loss and the awareness of her parents' intense sorrow, Dia was concerned about significant others who were also hurting. Her sister's spouse was in a critical condition and bedridden for a long time. Dia regretted that he was unable to attend the funeral and she realised that he experienced difficulties in coming to terms with his young wife's death. As his friend, Dia was aware not only of her brother-in-law's physical pain but also of his psychic pain and experienced a sense of

responsibility to sustain him emotionally as well. Soon after the funeral, she often helped him with his physiotherapy but became increasingly aware that for him the value of the visits revolved around speaking about the loss. His need to talk was particularly difficult for Dia as she sought to contain her grief for fear of breaking down. Because of her personality, she needed time to reflect and to work through her loss on a cognitive level before she could share her inner feelings with anybody. She could not submit to her grief for fear of collapsing altogether and experienced the supportive interaction with her sibling's spouse as an additional stress.

Although Dia was aware of the devastating effect of the loss on her parents, she felt grateful that they at least had external support. Speculating on a different family constellation, she feels relieved that she did not have younger siblings for whom she would have had to assume responsibility as she realises that her parents did not have the energy to cope with any additional demands. Although Dia does not want to be perceived as a victim weighed down by heavy responsibility, experiencing the struggle of others around her made her task that much more stressful and she experienced conflicting thoughts and feelings. While she needed a space in which to grieve, she was also afraid of losing the meaningful relationships that she had and she often wondered whether having other siblings would have been a source of support or an additional *burden*.

6. Withdrawal and Time to be Alone (10,11,12,13,17,74,75,77)

At the funeral Dia was greatly relieved to find that she could *withdraw* because there were others who took care of her parents. Although her friends were also there and were involved and caring, she realised that they had other priorities and she did not expect a great deal of support from them. Implicitly Dia felt relieved as she could not immediately respond to her loss. She needed a space to reflect and digest and she realised that having *time to be alone* helped to preserve a sense of integration and enabled her to cope. The only person that she felt comfortable with was a close friend who had also lost a sister (6 months earlier) and Dia recalls that she contacted this friend a few times immediately after the accident.

The completion of a major academic task also demanded Dia's immediate attention and provided her with the necessary relief from the pain of others, enabling her to deal with her grief in her own way and in her own time. Comfortable in the knowledge that her parents had adequate outside support, Dia kept herself occupied, legitimately closing her door against the "storm outside" while still having time to work through her inner chaos. She actually asked others to leave her alone and felt grateful that she had time alone, that she could withdraw and was not compelled to work through the grief with her family. She believes that having the opportunity to do this and having the support of a friend who had had a similar experience, helped her to survive this difficult period.

7. The Value of Social Support: (8,54,55,56)

From the outset, Dia and her family were embraced by helpful community. She appreciated the presence of a young man (a stranger) who, shortly after the death, spoke with her at great length without attempting to offer easy consolation. More specifically, Dia *valued* the ongoing *support of others* (family and circle of friends) who rallied around her and her parents and she believes that this was very significant in her loss experience. Aware that her parents did not have the strength to cope, Dia appreciated the support of others that relieved her of the responsibility of having to sustain her parents. She, herself, made few demands on them; in effect she wanted time alone to deal with her own loss while they dealt with theirs. The presence of a special family friend and her repeated and active support, more in terms of “doing” rather than “talking” was particularly valuable and Dia has come to realise the value of unconditional friendship in a situation of sibling loss.

8. Hidden Grief (16,57,67)

Dia held on to her grief, unable to trust others or herself with her raw inner emotions. She needed time to reflect and to recover a degree of control over her emotions before giving verbal expression to them and she could not share her feelings with anybody, not even her boyfriend. Although she was involved with all the arrangements following her sister’s death, she was grateful that others, taking their cue from the grieving family, never asked her how she felt. This relieved her of the pain of discussion and implicitly of the fear of total collapse. Dia simply could not weaken, could not yield to her grief or acknowledge that she could not cope for fear of breaking down and her *grief* remained *hidden* for many years. Externally she seemed to be coping well while internally her pain was intense. Later, she comes to realise that one’s individual personality significantly influences one’s grief process.

9. The Trauma of Leaving Home (25,29,30,31,32,33,62,63)

The death of her sister made *leaving home* extremely difficult for Dia and she experienced severe inner conflict and stress. While she had always been a fiercely independent person and needed her own space, she was also acutely aware of her familial responsibility and the supportive role that she played in holding the family together and in facilitating change in her parents. Her decision to leave home became a formidable and *traumatic* emotional task: more than getting her parents’ permission was the inner struggle to give herself permission to leave. Dia loved her parents dearly and her consideration and awareness of their intense pain as well as their difficulty in coping with yet another “loss” delayed her departure. Although she went to work in a city at some distance from her parents, initially she continued to live at home and commuted. Reflecting anxiously on how they would interpret her wish to move out of home, Dia became immobilised, unable to bring herself to the point of saying, “Now I am going!” Contributing to her conflict and stress was the realisation that she was breaking new ground, her sister having lived at home until she got married, and Dia realises that her

decision to leave home was a foreign concept for her parents. Once she had told her parents of her wish to move out of home, her fears were confirmed. They could not understand her need to separate and subtly blamed each other, assuming that their reactions to the loss were driving Dia away.

Dia realised that her parents' need to hold on to her was greater than their understanding of her situation. As the only remaining child, she had become her parents' sole focus, so much so that she felt suffocated and wanted to escape from their intense embrace. However, while emotionally she welcomed the opportunity to break away, she also understood that a separation would be extremely painful for her parents. Dia realised that her parents could not get over their loss and that their neediness blurred their vision of her needs. She felt helpless in making them understand that she needed space, and it pained her deeply that she would have to cut herself free from them by force. Although Dia finally left home (18 months after her sister's death), she remains acutely aware of how traumatic leaving home was and she feels convinced that the separation from her parents would have been easier if she had had other siblings.

10. Death Anxiety (36)

The death of her sister left Dia with a severe anticipatory *anxiety* when travelling to the sea by car and she has only very recently (this year) partially overcome her anxiety. However, she still retains traces of her fear of *death*. Although rationally she realises that an accident can occur in any place and at any time, emotionally she still associates travelling on the highway with having an accident and takes the necessary safety precautions. Paradoxically she is more relaxed when travelling in the city.

11. Abandonment and Aloneness: (44)

With the passing of time and in the context of the loss of significant others (sister and father), Dia becomes aware of a gradual but incremental anxiety about being left entirely alone at some stage in her life. Reflecting on her future and on other significant relationships, *abandonment and aloneness* become frightening possibilities as Dia realises that a spouse can choose to remain in the relationship or not while a sister, or a child, *must* be there whether they want to be there or not. With the loss of her only sibling, Dia fears abandonment and aloneness and comes to appreciate even more what has been lost in losing her sister.

12. Vacillation and Temporality: (39,51)

Dia found that she experienced the loss of her sister differently in different situations. She *vacillated* between feeling totally devastated by the loss and then something would happen and she would view it in a different light. With the passage of *time* she became aware of how emotionally unyielding her brother-in-law could be with his intimate other. Dia felt strongly that had he treated her sister in that way, she (Dia) would not have accepted it and would have protected her sibling. This would have

caused some conflict. As new meanings emerge, she feels that perhaps it was for the best: for example, her sister's husband might have come to dominate her. It was at such times that Dia felt that perhaps her sister had been spared many hardships. She believes that if she had been asked about her loss experience shortly after her sister's death (up to 5 years later) she might have felt and responded very differently.

13. The Paradoxical Experience of the Gap: (40,41,42,43,45,64)

Although Dia felt the gap left by her sister's death, paradoxically she also realised that they were very different and too far apart in age at the time of her sister's death to be really "pals." At some point, she experienced a yearning for a supportive sisterly relationship but, on reflection, realised that although she and her sister would have been there for each other, they were unlikely to have shared much. Dia also missed her sister as she prepared for her own marriage and while she recognised that the missing was not based on the strength of their relationship, she was aware of the potential for greater closeness in the future. Looking to future relationships and possibilities had her sister not died (once she had children; when her parents began to get older), Dia recognises the dialectical *paradox* that there would have been many positives and many negatives; it could have been either easier or more difficult. On the negative side, there might have been conflict between Dia and her family and her sister and her husband; on the positive side, it might have been easier to care for elderly parents and Dia also assumes that her sister may have provided better support for her mother following her father's death, because of the close bond between her sister and her mother.

Later Dia realises that her developing relationship with her own daughter filled the *gap* created by the loss of her sister and the awareness of the possibility that her daughter could become a replacement for her sister evoked deep inner conflict particularly when her daughter indicated that she wanted to pursue the same field of interest as her deceased aunt. Dia made a conscious effort to ensure that she did not influence her daughter.

14. Beyond Totality (52,53)

Dia realises that her image of her sister remained frozen at the time that she died and she often wondered how her sister's personality would have evolved and what she would have been like in the present. She realises that her sister would have changed with time, just as Dia herself had changed. Although she recognises that her sister's remembered image may have grown in dimension, she is aware that even when her sister was alive she had surprised Dia by revealing that she was capable of more than Dia assumed. Based predominantly on her experience of her sister's underlying strength and infinite possibilities, Dia realises that her sister has left her with something valuable, i.e. never to *totalise*; make assumptions about, or underestimate small or quiet people.

15. Survival Guilt (43,50,69,80)

Dia constantly sought answers to the question: “Why her and not me?” and felt *guilty* that she had *survived* while her sister had died. By comparing her life with that of her sister, Dia concludes that her own death would have been less devastating as fewer people would have been affected. Although she realises that her death would have been painful for others (sister and parents), she assumes that her loss would not have been as deeply mourned. In her attempt to make sense of the loss, Dia reflects on her sister’s positive qualities (responsible; cautious, controlled, predictable and successful) and on the nature of her significant relationships (close to mother; very special to grandmother; greatly loved by her husband), and concludes that by comparison her own death would not have affected others in the same way or for the same length of time. Faced with the reality of the loss and the fractured lives of so many significant others, Dia felt that in a logical (and just) world the one who had taken all the chances (i.e. herself); was seemingly irresponsible; had no permanent intimate relationship; and was unsure of her future career direction; *she* was the one who should have died in the place of her sister. She felt strongly that if she had had the choice, she would have planned it differently: *she*, and not her sister, would have died.

16. Anger and Pain in the Spiritual Struggle (70,71,72)

As a Christian, Dia felt close to God but with the loss of her friend’s sibling (6 months before her own sister's death) she started questioning how and why an omnipotent God could allow such a dreadful thing to happen. With the loss of her sister, feelings of anger arise together with a need to find answers. Dia directs her intense *anger and pain* towards God and a *spiritual struggle* unfolds as she seeks to understand her loss. She is relieved to find that she is allowed to be angry with God provided that she is able to communicate this directly and ask Him to help her to cope. Dia realises that this was a personal solution that evolved over time and that she could not have accepted this had it come from anybody else.

In her quest to find answers to the loss, Dia arrives at an understanding of the difference between the unquestioning acceptance of the easy and ready-made prescriptions of organised religion and the harsh and concrete reality of being-with-loss. This prompts her to test previously-held religious assumptions and to clarify her own personal beliefs. She rejects the abstract and emotional ideas of others and their attempts to console her with religious talk. For her, the loss was a lived reality, a painful “given”, and she felt that religious persuasion was not helpful. Through her personal struggle, her perception of God as the Ultimate Planner, based on her reading of a biblical story (Job), strikes a chord in Dia because of her passion for planning and she develops an insight and awareness that there are plans better than she can visualise or conceptualise. She comes to accept that there is a Higher Hand in these things and to entrust God with the planning of her life.

17. Seeking Comfort (39,68,78,79)

Although Dia's first encounter with death (i.e. her grandfather) was painful, she experienced the sudden and violent death of her sister as qualitatively different and realises that such a loss is even more awful than the loss of someone who has been ill for a long time. In her search to make sense of her sister's premature death, Dia sought and found *comfort* in her belief that because of her sister's gentle nature she would not have coped well with the more painful things of life. Reviewing her sister's life, recalling the fact that she had experienced the "ultimate" joy of love and the spiritual and physical union of marriage, Dia would often console herself with the thought that her sister had not been "cheated"; that she had, in effect, enjoyed the best part of her life. Also comforting was the thought that her sister had not left behind young dependants. Although Dia is aware that with a loss one seeks comforting thoughts, she comes to realise that her sister had in a sense been spared the hardship and pain that inevitably come in later life. Viewing the loss from this perspective, Dia's experience takes on a new meaning. The awareness of what her sister had lost (i.e. possible future hardship and pain) enabled Dia to see what her sister had achieved and experienced in her short life and made it easier for Dia to cope with her loss.

18. Trust and Mourning: (28,35,82)

It was only when she got married (3 years after the loss) that Dia was able, for the first time, to openly acknowledge her grief and cry about the loss of her sister. Dia remembers this period as a significant phase in her grief process. In the *trust* relationship with her spouse, she could finally let go of her pain and *mourn to* another, expressing how dreadful the loss was for her. Giving expression to her grief over a period of time provided the necessary relief and she felt more at peace. Her knowledge that her significant other could be trusted, that he would not be unduly upset by her grief and that she could reveal as much or as little as she wanted to without fear that he would insist that she disclose more, helped her to let go of the pain and enabled her to mourn the loss of her sister.

TABLE I

Participant 3: Elena

<u>NATURAL MEANING UNITS</u>	<u>CENTRAL THEMES</u>
1. Um ... in October it will be about ... it will be three years...It's about two and a half years now.	1. Elena's brother died approximately two-and-a-half years ago (i.e. before the interview with Elena).
2. Um ... I think him being ... well, very [involved] ... of course not just [that] ... well obviously a brother, he was very involved in the businesses. I think on that side of things it's taken a big knock ... because of that emotional side. Because the last shop we opened was his and ... um ... the shop in B was basically for him. So like <i>me</i> working in <i>that</i> , I did in a way for <i>him</i> ... it's a strange thing almost, ja (yes), but ja, I did it for him ...	2. Emotionally and functionally Elena and her family were dealt a heavy blow by the loss. Because of his involvement in the family businesses, her brother's death left a gap not only in their lives but also in the family businesses, a gap that Elena decided to fill. She realises that taking her brother's place in the business was in a sense doing something for <i>him</i> .
3. And obviously ... What I felt when it happened was ... well look, because it was obviously a great shock to us all ... and um ... I felt I needed to help the family through it ... like support the family. Um ... my mother ... I think it [he] was her soft spot (half-hearted laugh), he was a soft spot so I think she ... she took it very hard. I think as any mother would .. um...	3. Contributing to her readiness to assume her brother's place in the family business was Elena's awareness of the tremendous shock for the whole family, particularly for her mother, and she felt a need to support her parents and to help them through the loss.
4. He was twenty-five, ja, so it was very young and ... a lot of energy. He was ... um ... he was ... if he wasn't here at home, he was always talked of, you know. We'd like sit down if he wasn't here and we'd discuss Tom, you know, It was always about him and what he did And ... He was ... um ... like I said, a lot of energy, so when he was gone, it ... it ... it changed our lives	4. Elena feels that the loss changed their lives radically. Her brother was an energetic and vital young man (25 years old) who was always the centre of family discussion so that even today she is acutely aware of his absence and feels the painful emptiness created by his death.

<p>totally. I think up to today, it's ... ja, it's not nice ... at all ... obviously ...</p>	
<p>5. Obviously Christmas and things like that are like ... terrible ... they're dreaded. ... Um ... ja, I think, the last one we tried to go away from ... you know, like from the home because we always used to be here and stuff, but ... um ...also it doesn't work.</p>	<p>5. Elena feels the loss more acutely during certain times of the year (e.g. Christmas) and these occasions, usually celebrated at home when her brother was alive, are anticipated with dread. She is aware that going away from home does not help and realises that from this pain, there is no escape.</p>
<p>6. Ja, it's ... a <i>hole</i> - in our hearts, in our lives, in our ...</p>	<p>6. Elena experiences the loss as a void, an emptiness in their lives.</p>
<p>7. Although I'm not ... I'm not angry about it ... I don't know... I ... my brother was a success story for me. Ja, I don't know, like the way he changed and the way he was, like towards the end ... the way he felt about himself, the way he showed it to other people ... I don't know ... as if he knew he was going, I don't know ... if that's the way it goes...(rather desperate), I don't know ... (little laugh) ... Ja (he lived life fully), but towards the end he changed almost to a better person and a lot of people saw that and that's ... that's why I say his was a beautiful story because even though he'd ... um ... maybe spoken aggressively before or ... um ... towards the ... the end, I think it was the last three months, he was not ... he was <i>soft</i>, I don't know, he wouldn't shout, he ... you know, he told my mom: "I love you", he wouldn't ... used to treat her so badly sometimes I don't know, he was content with himself, I think that's the biggest ... and that's how I see it as a success story.</p>	<p>7. Elena has no anger about her brother's death and experiences his life as a "success story" as he had changed a lot towards the end of his life (last 3 months), ultimately becoming a better person (less aggressive, more loving and content with himself). She seeks answers for this transformation and wonders whether he perhaps had a premonition that he did not have long to live.</p>
<p>8. My mother was very ... very ... you know</p>	<p>8. Elena believes that her mother, who lived in</p>

<p>... angry about it ... not angry ... you know, disappointed. She'd always say, you know, like: "My biggest fear is to lose a child", and I guess it happened, ja.</p>	<p>constant fear of the possibility of losing a child, might have felt angry about the loss but, on reflection, she realises that it was not so much anger as an overriding feeling of disappointment when her mother's fears were realised.</p>
<p>9. Um ... I know even up to today, I don't think, ja ... it's ... the pain is still there. You miss him a lot, you know. I always wonder what he'd be like, you know, how ... you know, what he'd say to me in a certain situation or whatever and ... um ... you know, how our kids would be one day ...</p>	<p>9. To this day, Elena still feels the pain of the loss and she thinks constantly of her brother. She is aware not only of her loss in the present but also recognises the loss of future relationships and possibilities (what he would be like now; what he would say to her; what their children would be like one day) and the missing persists.</p>
<p>10. ... and I think the saddest part is that I can associate <i>now</i> more because I can remember him now, you know, because I'm also young In twenty years time I won't ... I won't be able to <i>see</i> him older and I think that ... you almost feel like you're losing touch and that's very sad ... ja.</p>	<p>10. For Elena, the most distressing aspect of her loss is that, in the more distant future, she will lose the strong connection with her brother that she presently feels. She is aware that as she grows older, her memories of him will recede and she will not be able to visualise, or relate to him as an older person. It hurts her and she feels sad about this future eventuality.</p>
<p>11. It was beautiful Um ... he was loved ... a lot. I don't know if you heard about his funeral. That church was full. It was ... Ja ... he was a people's person. He loved going out and speaking with people ... and, ja, he obviously did his rounds very well ... (laughs) because he was very ... that church was very full. I've never seen it that full for any funeral before. Not that I've been to many but I think those words came out of everybody's mouth. Um ... a good ... like a good ... a good boy, he was, you</p>	<p>11. Elena was delighted and impressed by the large number of people that attended the funeral and she realised that, despite her brother's "naughty and cheeky" behaviour, he was greatly loved and that his loss had touched many people. Implicit in his popularity is an affirmation by others of her brother's intrinsic goodness.</p>

<p>know. He was naughty and he was like cheeky ... but, you know what I mean!</p>	
<p>12. It was a motorbike accident. He'd gone away with two friends to S ... ja, they all had bikes, they all went like on a run ... ja, and one corner too fast ... (visibly upset - no tears).</p>	<p>12. Elena's brother had gone away with friends on a motorcycle run and was killed instantly when he took a corner too fast.</p>
<p>13. Ja. Although one picture I have in my mind ... when we saw him ... when we <i>first</i> saw him there at S after he died ... um ... I remember his face because he wasn't injured. His face was still perfect. His body was still perfect. He ... he just ... obviously his neck had ... um... you know, broken neck ... but his face was still perfect and I'd never ... I'd never seen him that beautiful in my life. He was a good-looking boy, you know, but he ... I don't know ... he looked ... he looked <i>beautiful</i>, I don't know what it was ... peaceful I don't know ... he never, ever looked that good to me. Just ... <i>cold</i> ... and that ... that was very ...</p>	<p>13. Although Elena's initial feeling at the sight of her brother's face after the accident was that she had never seen him looking as handsome, as beautiful or as peaceful as on that day, she is also confronted by the dreadful fact of his death - his body was cold and lifeless.</p>
<p>14. Ja, ja we all went together [to identify the body] ... It was, Ugh! ... It was a terrible day. It's also ... we drove ... it was terrible, and the weather was terrible, it was cloudy and it was drizzling and the whole ... ugh! ... the whole thing was really u[gh]! ...</p>	<p>14. Elena recalls with pain and horror the drive with her family to identify her brother's body. Vividly imprinted in her mind is the cloudy and drizzly weather of that dreadful day.</p>
<p>15. ..and I'm a very ... I think, like straight person, so I had to break it to my parents that he died, you know, cause they kind of knew but no one would like come forward and say it.</p>	<p>15. Elena assumed the responsibility of breaking the news of her brother's death to her parents for although they suspected that her brother had died, others (the extended family) could not bring themselves to actually voice this.</p>
<p>16. So ... I remember sitting at home ... here ...</p>	<p>16. Elena recalls that she was at home preparing</p>

<p>it was ... because I was writing my Honours exams at university when it happened and I was sitting here with a friend and my cousin phoned me, she says to me they're on their way from J. I mustn't go anywhere ... Is this detail too much? She said I mustn't go anywhere, they're on their way. She said something happened to T. So I said: "OK well ... like what ... what?" No, she can't tell me. So then from there I knew, look something's happening. I phoned her back: "Tell me if he's hurt. I'm old enough" ... you know, "just tell me". "No, we're on our way." Then I thought, no ... obviously something was up</p>	<p>for her Honours exams when she received news from the extended family that "something" had happened to her brother. Although the family assumed a protective stance, reluctant to communicate the full reality to her, Elena became increasingly uneasy and realised that something serious had happened - her brother was more than hurt.</p>
<p>17. So I tried to phone friends ... I phoned his friends who were there ... obviously ... but (they) must have switched off the phone, or something – it's not the easiest thing to say. Um ... I phoned his girl friend ... um ... she didn't know anything. Eventually I got ... a ... a ... anyway by the ... you know, I got hold of numbers ... eventually she phoned me back and she told me: "No, he died."</p>	<p>17. Elena was anxious to know what had happened to her brother and tried unsuccessfully to contact his friends who, she realised later, had been avoiding communicating the dreadful news. Finally Elena arrived at the truth: her brother was dead.</p>
<p>18. So basically I just went to the shop and ... look it's going to get said... it's...you know, so I just ... I told them ... "Tom is dead!" Very straight and not very tactful I guess but, ag! (ah!) it's not the easiest thing to say and it's</p>	<p>18. Elena believed that the truth had to be revealed and simply went to her parents and told them: "Tom is dead!" Although she is aware that she was abrupt in conveying the news, Elena realises that there is no gentle way to impart the fact of death.</p>
<p>19. Ja, and from there ... my mother's <i>never</i> been the same person; my father's never ... ; our <i>lives</i> have never been the same... we're just not the same people, you know. It ... it changes you a lot... um ... (long</p>	<p>19. From that moment, Elena's experience of self and world is radically changed and she becomes aware of the extent to which her brother's death has changed her, her family and their lives.</p>

<p>pause) ... Um ... <i>harder</i>, I guess. I've become a lot harder ... generally in life.</p>	
<p>20. I don't know... Um ... religion-wise it's changed me. I used to be a lot more religious (a self conscious little laugh). Not a lot more but ... um ...I won't say I'm angry with God. I won't say I'm upset with Him but I've just <i>distanced</i> myself from Him ... although lately it is better, you know, I am getting closer ... but before I didn't ... not that I wouldn't go to church on ... "it's Easter, I'm not going", type of thing, you know, but I wouldn't <i>feel</i> it, as I felt it before ... you know. I really don't know why, maybe you can explain that to me, I don't know ... um</p>	<p>20. Elena had been close to God but with her loss she found that she distanced herself from Him, not wilfully or in anger but more from an inability to feel His presence as she did previously. Although, with time, she has started to draw closer to Him, she remains confused and conflicted as she struggles to make sense of the changes in her relationship to God.</p>
<p>21. ..and I tried to feel stronger ... especially for my parents ... because ... I see ... I don't know, I guess I love my family a lot you know. We are very close as Mediterranean families are. And I think ... um ... I've tried to be there for them as much as I can, you know.</p>	<p>21. Elena is aware of her strong attachment to her family and in her attempts to maintain the closeness of the family unit, she tried to be strong for her parents (stronger than she felt) and to be there for them as much as possible.</p>
<p>22. In a funny way though, like my mother will never like sit down and like: "Are you okay", and ... it's like she knows I'm there, you know, the things I do, but I won't necessarily like phone her up: "Are you okay?", you know. But, ja, she knows I'm there. The love's there ... the fundamental love is there ... and things like that ...</p>	<p>22. While Elena continued to support her family, she found it strange that her mother never asked how she was feeling. In turn, Elena also avoided enquiring about her mother's feelings, reasoning that the bond of love within the family is there, it is a bond of "fundamental love" and so words are not necessary. .</p>
<p>23. [Talk] about him? ... um ... if ... um ... if I really feel like I need to [talk], I will just say something but not really much. I won't elaborate on my feelings as much, you know. I think it's ... even though I am very</p>	<p>23. Although Elena may feel a need to talk about her brother, she seldom discusses her feelings about the loss even with her close friends. She is aware that they become uncomfortable with such talk and she tries to</p>

<p>close with my friends it's almost ... I don't want to put them in that position because they feel awkward and ... I might just say, you know: "I wonder what my brother would think", or ...</p>	<p>spare them any embarrassment by restricting herself to un-emotional comments about her brother.</p>
<p>24. I think, especially in the beginning, I would just like hear happy stories about him and ... "ah, he would do this!" ... and I'd love to hear things he did and ... I think initially I wanted to find out everything about him from all his friends that I didn't know because I obviously knew the brother-side of him, you know, and I didn't know the friend-side and I wanted to know the friend-side, the boyfriend-side, the every-side of him.</p>	<p>24. At first, Elena wanted to know everything about her brother and she loved listening to his friends' "stories" about him . Hearing about their experiences with her brother was a way of discovering aspects of his life that she had not shared and opened a window to a side of him that she, as a sister, had not experienced.</p>
<p>25. And ... I don't know, it's a strange thing ... it's almost as if when he left, he left me with that little magic, I always say (spontaneous laugh)... with that little magic, ja. Like people will tell me, ja, like: "How did you know...?", or ... I don't know ... especially when it comes to his friends, you know, and it was ... I don't know ... I just feel he left ... I can't explain. He had such an air [about] to him and such a ... um ... I don't know ... (long pause) an <i>energy</i> ... an energy to him that I loved and in a way, I don't know, he's left me with it, I feel he's left me with it, but ... which is beautiful and I think I'll carry it through with me ... (pause) ... Ja, a <i>feel</i> of his ... Ja,</p>	<p>25. In an inexplicable way, with the loss, Elena feels that her brother has left her a rich legacy (his <i>energy</i>; his "magic") - qualities that she loved so much in him and which others now see in her. She is aware of the beauty of what her brother has left her and believes that she will hold on to this forever.</p>
<p>26. ..but ... um ... I think I've ... ja ... it's been a fight, a struggle, you know, it's an emotional fight, you know. You always try and ... block it ... not ... not ... I ... I won't</p>	<p>26. Elena is aware that the loss of her brother has been a constant emotional fight and she struggles against her emotions. Although, with time, the pain has diminished, to this</p>

<p>say block ... ja, in a way it might be blocking it, I don't know, if I blocked it or dealt with it. I actually ... I still don't know to this day. I don't really know ... you know. Obviously I don't feel as much pain, you know because time has gone by</p>	<p>day, she is still not sure whether she has avoided (blocked) the grief or dealt with it.</p>
<p>27. Ja ... I would say [the loss has struck at her faith] ... which is not nice but I think it's just something I have to like work through. I can't ... I think the worst part is I can't really pin-point it because it's not anger - because I'm not angry with God for taking him away because ... um ... He obviously has reasons or whatever to have done what He did ... um ... I don't hate Him for it ... um ... I don't know, I'm not angry with Him ... I'm just, I guess ... disappointed Ja ... I guess a bit disappointed ... but, um, I must work my way through that, you know. I'm already much bet(ter) ... well better ... ja ... just a bit more time ... it will come. Ja.</p>	<p>27. Elena feels distressed that the loss has shaken her faith and altered her relationship with God. Although she does not feel anger or hatred towards Him and accepts that He had His reasons for allowing this to happen, she struggles to understand her emotions as she feels the familiar order slipping away and is aware of a certain disappointment with God. While she feels confident that she will re-establish the bond with Him, she recognises that she needs more time to work through this.</p>
<p>28. OK, my brother was always here but he was never here, type of thing, you know. He was here but if we were having a family dinner he was in and then he was like out because he was going to see a friend or something. He was a busy body, he wanted to do everything, you know. I think he wanted to live life to the full ... it was almost ... he wanted to do anything and everything that he could, you know, and it almost makes sense, you know, after he'd gone, I don't know ... maybe that's why he was like life-hungry...</p>	<p>28. Elena regrets that her brother threw himself into life with an intensity that did not allow for much contact with the family. After his premature death, her brother's need to live life to the full assumes new meaning; his hunger-for-life is almost justified - at least he had lived his allotted span to the full.</p>
<p>29. Um ... I don't know, any little story, you</p>	<p>29. In the desire to keep her brother's memory</p>

<p>know, it's like almost like I can latch onto it for some <i>more</i>, or like remember him even <i>more ...</i></p>	<p>alive, Elena eagerly held on to any small incident or story about him as this expanded her memories of him and enabled her to remember him more fully.</p>
<p>30. So you know, having heard everybody's like little stories, or ... especially closely afterwards, his friends would come up to me and ... like a friend I'd never met and he says to me: "You don't know what your brother has done for me", you know, he was ... he did things that really touched people in ... you know he'd obviously helped them with a specific problem but ... I don't know ... they'd come and tell me: "You don't know what he's done. He's the greatest person, you know. He's helped us so ..."... "he's helped me" - it was a specific guy. He said: "He's helped me so, so much. I'm so grateful" ... and like hearing things like that, I think that makes me ... you know, proud of him and ... ja ... ja, and ... and you hear That's like <i>real</i> stories you know ... not just like what he wore ... where he went, and and ... it's like actual ... ja ...</p>	<p>30. Shortly after her brother's death, Elena welcomed the stories that his friends and others shared with her. She became aware of his tremendous caring, generosity and kindness and realised the extent to which her brother had touched the lives of others. This enabled her to remember him with pride.</p>
<p>31. Ja! ... and I think it was also very sad for his girl friend. She was ... she also had a child, I guess, and he was almost like a father ... you know ... like a father-figure, I guess, for the child because the child was about seven when my brother ... [died] [they had been going out] Ja ... almost for like <i>five</i> years ... they went out for long.</p>	<p>31. Elena was aware that her brother's girlfriend and her child were also deeply affected by the death of her brother.</p>
<p>32. And that's another nice thing, you know, he took a girl and, yes, she is a beautiful girl and all, but she had a child and I think a lot</p>	<p>32. Elena recognises other positive qualities in her brother that set him apart from others: he had committed to a relationship with a</p>

<p>of men won't take a woman, as beautiful as she might be, with a child. I know I discussed that with some of my friends and they were like: "I don't want the extra baggage", type of thing, you know, and he took her and ... shame the little boy's ... ja, he ... he was a father-figure to him ... and it was ... it was beautiful.</p>	<p>woman who had a child and had assumed the role of "father." Listening to the opinions of other young male friends, Elena realises that many men are not willing to accept the additional burden of a dependant and this affirms her perception that her brother was special.</p>
<p>33. Just, he was ... ja ... he was a speed freak. Look he <i>is</i> my brother but he's ... ja, he would always drive fast ... and, ag, the fastest car and ... the bike was just too powerful, I think, for him and he took a wrong corner ... and ja ... it was sad ...</p>	<p>33. Despite her loyalty to her brother, Elena was also aware of his weakness for fast driving that ultimately led to his death and she retains a deep sadness over the loss.</p>
<p>34. [Relationship] With <i>him</i>? ... um ... I had a weak spot for him (laughs). I did, ja ... He was two years ... ja, three years in ... ja, two years older than me. Um ... I think if I had a problem and I'd really ... you know ... I'd go and sit down with him, although I would rather pick a friend, you know, because the girls usually understand better or whatever ... you know, but if it was a problem that ... you know ... I think I'd like approach him on that , you know, we were close in that way.</p>	<p>34. Elena had a sentimental affection for her brother who was two years older than she was. Although she often preferred to discuss personal problems with an understanding female friend, there was a closeness between her and her brother that enabled her to approach him with certain concerns.</p>
<p>35. I think he ... um ... he loved me a lot for what ... Ok, obviously for what I was, but (also for) what I did for him because every time he'd ask me for something I'd tell him: "this is the last time I'm doing it , do you understand?", and the next time he asked me, I'd do it again, you know, that's the kind of soft spot I had for him, and I would always tell him, "No, I'm not going to do it!" and ... ag! (ah!), we used to fight</p>	<p>35. Elena believes that her brother loved her a great deal not only for what she did for him but also for the person that she was. Although they also fought a lot and conflict arose in their relationship as her brother made many demands on her, loyalty and affection prevailed and the sibling bond never weakened.</p>

<p>a lot as well, you know, not speak to each other for like ... (laughs) ... like a week or something (laughs) and then, ag, it was fine, and ... ja ... it was fine.</p>	
<p>36. But I think ... ja ... I think he ... he respected me a lot and that ... that means like the world to me, you know. He'd obviously told my friends, you know, "she's ... she's the <i>best</i> in our family"...you know, "She ... she doesn't... she doesn't obviously understand her value as much as she should", you know, and, "She can just ask for anything and she'll get it." That's how much, you know, he thought that I was like worth ... it was nice, you know, because he <i>never</i> really ... he <i>never</i> really communicated his feelings to me. We never had the type of relationship like: "I love you", or ... or ... you know... it was ... I don't ... I think it wouldn't mean very much ... it's like you <i>feel</i> it's there, so you don't have to say it that much.</p>	<p>36. Elena believed that her brother loved and respected her but he had never directly communicated this to her. It was through the comments of her friends that she came to realise the extent to which he valued her. Although she accepted that when love exists words are not necessary, after the loss, his affirmation of her worth meant a great deal to her.</p>
<p>37. You know, they're always <i>there</i> ... you take for granted that they're always <i>there</i> until ... And I think ... ja ... I would have <i>loved</i> to have spent more time with him but I guess that's impossible... my mother says the same and ... but I ... I would have really loved to have spent more time with him. He was always just ... So difficult, you know, life gets so busy ... the one person gets this, the other gets that, and you don't really spend as much time with each other as you should, and I think especially us with businesses there is not really much family time, you know ... it's a lot ... um ...</p>	<p>37. With the loss Elena becomes aware that one takes family for granted, assuming that because significant others are there, they always will be. She realises that with the pressure of everyday life, one neglects to spend family time together and (like her mother) she regrets that she did not spend more time with her brother.</p>

<p>“got to work, got to work!”</p>	
<p>38. Ja, my father is also taking it a bit ... he’s obviously not as, you know, as forward as my mom. My mother like ... she’ll express it more and she’ll cry and she’ll talk to him more or whatever she, you know, she feels helps her. My father is more quiet about it. [But] It’s also hit him hard. I think ... um ... he, my brother, was very like similar in character to my father, you know, so that’s why like the things that my brother did my father would understand and you know, he ... Ja ... I think he understood him <i>very</i> well ... because he was also ... himself ... Ja, and it ... it ...</p>	<p>38. Elena is aware that her father’s silent sorrow runs deep as her brother was very similar to her father and he understood him well. She realises that although her father does not express his grief as openly as her mother does, his son’s death has struck at his very being and he too is deeply wounded.</p>
<p>39. Ja, I think the worst part for me is to see my ... my parents like this, you know ... um ... it, it like hurts me and it upsets me, you know, because it’s ... ugh! ... it’s just not the same people, you know, and it’s just really sad ... it’s really, really sad ... Ja, ja. It feels like I’ve lost my ... not <i>lost</i> my family but, it’s ja, definitely changed us in many ways ... Ja, ag!</p>	<p>39. For Elena, the most distressing aspect of her loss is witnessing the radical changes in her parents. Although she does not feel that she has <i>lost</i> her family, she is aware that they are not the people that they were and this saddens and hurts her deeply. She realises that they have all been changed by the loss.</p>
<p>40. ... and all his things we’ve left, you know, and ... I guess it’s like a way of not ... trying not to let go. I don’t know ... you don’t want to let go, you just keep his ... as long as you can ... (half hearted laugh) Ja, it’s just how you <i>feel</i>. (long pause) Ja ... Mm ...I can’t think of anything else ... (nervous little laugh)</p>	<p>40. The family have kept all of her brother’s belongings exactly as they were and Elena supposes that this is their way of holding on to her brother. She realises that in effect one does not want to let go of a loved one and tries to maintain the link for as long as possible.</p>
<p>41. Ja, [I have] an older brother, ja. I think for him it was a bit easier because he’s living, you know, in another home with his wife and ... I think it was easier for him, you</p>	<p>41. Living at home, Elena’s entire being is immersed in the loss while her elder brother, who is married, is able to find some respite when he returns to his own home. Although</p>

<p>know, like you're <i>here</i> but then you go away to your <i>home</i> and it's not so, you know, difficult whereas for me I'd live it, eat it, breathe it all the time, you know. I won't say it's any easier on <i>him</i>, you know, I won't say that either. It's just ... ja ... it was just <i>different</i> in that way... um...</p>	<p>Elena is aware that he also feels the loss, she believes that it may be a little easier, or at least different, for him as he is not constantly surrounded by the pain.</p>
<p>42. I don't know, I felt ... I felt really strong ... I don't know how I did it especially close to when it happened, because ... I ... it was: "I'll take it all and I'll deal with it", and I think ... ja ... from leaving ... my Honours exams, I was writing at that point in time, I didn't write my first one because it was a week after his death, I wrote all the others and I passed them and then I went straight into the shop and then I just took it in my hands: "Come, I'll do it", you know, because ... obviously because of the emotional loss my parents couldn't deal with things</p>	<p>42. Soon after the death, Elena surprised herself by her strength and after completing her exams immediately took over the running of her brother's business. The awareness of her parents' emotional collapse influenced her decision to continue with life's tasks and to assume family responsibilities.</p>
<p>43. ... and , I mean, you ... you can't stop life, unfortunately ... it feels like you want to stop life ... you don't want to know anything but I mean you ... it would be worse to sit in the house and cry all day. Ja ... Yet I felt very weak. You know, like the way I looked. I'd lost a lot of weight, you know ... um ... ja, terrible. (long pause)</p>	<p>43. While Elena also felt as if she wanted to withdraw from the world and was disinterested in anything unrelated to her brother, she realised that unfortunately life continues and she reasoned that it would be worse to sit and cry all day. However, although she was strong, deep down she felt extremely weak and this revealed itself on a bodily level.</p>
<p>44. And I hate going to his grave ... ja ... (little laugh). I don't see the point of it ... I don't ... it was ... it's his last like ... physical state type thing, you know, but I don't want to associate a graveyard or anything with him. I think he was too happy a soul to</p>	<p>44. Elena feels a strong aversion to visiting her brother's grave, preferring to remember him as the happy and vital person that he was in life. She realises that the finality of the tombstone brings the loss home more forcefully but she does not want to associate</p>

<p>... you know ... to associate that [with him] and ... I really don't like it. I don't go ... I'm hardly involved. Ja, I'll go ... like (clicks tongue) five times a year maybe, or six, but I don't like it. I'd rather look at a photo and that way ... Ja. I hate to see his name on that cross. I think that's ugh ... it's just ... I don't know, I guess it hits you in the face, but I don't like it.</p>	<p>her brother with death and resists going to the cemetery.</p>
<p>45. You see my mom is totally different she loves to go. Every weekend she'll ... flowers and the whole thing, ja ... (little laugh). I don't know ... just different, ja, just different ...</p>	<p>45. Elena is aware that her mother likes to go to the graveyard (visits regularly; takes flowers), and she accepts that she and her mother differ in this respect.</p>
<p>46. Ja. And I love to see his friends, you know, especially people he was close [to] although it's very difficult to communicate with them because when they see me or whatever, they ... they obviously [think] "Tom", you know, get a picture of him, so for <i>them</i> it's difficult as well as for me because I can sense that, even though I would love to sit down and ask them, you know: "tell me a story", or ... "what did he say when you did this?" you know, but ... ja ... it's not like that, unfortunately ...</p>	<p>46. What Elena finds most meaningful is to be with her brother's close friends and to share stories about his life but she senses that it is painful for them to be with her as they immediately associate her with their lost friend. She regrets that she cannot initiate discussions with them on this level and remains silent.</p>
<p>47. Ja, death's a very strange thing (little laugh) to deal with ... I fear it ... (little laugh). I fear death. Ja. Like I've seen ... you know, before it has never really happened to anyone ... it has never touched home. It's not really an issue, you know, because ... look people die, but yes, I guess, they're old and things like that ...</p>	<p>47. Having come face-to-face with death, Elena finds it bewildering and fears it. Death had touched her personally and she realises that it is not something that is distant or simply part of the natural order of life (old people die) as she had previously believed. This frightens her.</p>
<p>48. But from experiencing my brother's death I fear ... I fear losing my parents ... or</p>	<p>48. Through her brother's death, Elena has become fearful of losing her parents and</p>

<p>anybody close to me, you know... it's just like ... (long pause) ... Well I don't fear it every day and stuff, but ... um ... it doesn't really... I won't say it really affects me ... I just ... I'd appreciate maybe people mo(re) ... like my parents, more ... because I know they won't be here anymore ... you know, like forever type of thing, because you've been born and they've always been here type of thing and you ... and, you know, they will always be here type of thing but through the death I've basically realised it doesn't happen ... you know, they're not always going to be there, so I appreciate them more in ways, you know ... ja ...</p>	<p>other significant others and while her fear is not pervasive, she has come to appreciate others (parents) more. The loss of her brother changes her vision as she realises that life is transitory and that she cannot assume that those who have always been there are going to be there forever.</p>
<p>49. No, not my own [death]. No. I don't think I'll die soon (hearty laugh). You get some people who say: "No, I'll never live [to be] old." I don't know if they <i>know</i> [that they won't live for long], but I ... I think <i>I'll</i> live [to be] old (laughs again).</p>	<p>49. Although Elena is aware that there are those who almost sense that they might die young, Elena's death anxiety does not extend to a fear that she will die at a young age.</p>
<p>50. A grandmother [died], but she was overseas so it's not really, you know, you're not ... although I was very close to her when I was little. She brought me up apparently. My mom was [busy] ... and ... she used to stay here for a while [came from overseas] and ... ja ... a beautiful woman, you know ... like ... in her heart, you know... and ... I lost her but that was almost, you know, she was <i>old</i> and I wasn't <i>that</i> close, you know, with her as I was with my brother, you know. Ja, so it was ... um ... (long pause) I don't know it's harder ...</p>	<p>50. Although Elena lost her grandmother to death, she accepted it as part of the natural order of life and her death was not as difficult for Elena to deal with as the loss of her brother. She realises that while she was close to her grandmother, her attachment to her brother was infinitely stronger.</p>
<p>51. [Doing things with brother when little]</p>	<p>51. Elena has vivid memories of her brother and</p>

<p>(laughs heartily) Ja, fighting! (laughs) Ja, I remember ... I remember him ... like we were playing hopscotch down this little thing here (points to the spot outside the kitchen window) and he'd trip me and I'd fall and then I'd cry. I remember things like that very clearly. And I remember like running frantically to the phone to phone my mother and tell her: "uh ..uh...uh!" ... and as I'd get to the phone, he'd like pull the cord out, you know ... he loved to tease his little sister, you know (laughs). Especially when you're little, you know ... when you're younger ... [2-3 years] it's like more of an age gap. I think lately it wasn't that much of an age gap. We'd go out more, you know, together, whereas before it's like: "Don't speak to my friends", and that you know ... but ... um ... (long pause)</p>	<p>she recalls that as children they played and fought with each other. Her experience of being victimised by him was heightened by the advantage of age (2-3 years older than she was) and she often felt helpless and cried. She realises that when one is young even a small age gap can be quite large but more recently the gap seemed to narrow, their relationship changed and she would occasionally go out with him and his friends.</p>
<p>52. Ja, I was always covering up for him, I think (laughs), very often ... I was always, ja, picking up [the] his pieces and like covering up for him which he <i>never</i> knew really because I would never tell him: "Guess what I did?", you know but ... um ... ja, I don't know I just did it ... I think he would have appreciated it (laughs). I'd be at the shop and I'd tell my dad ... look small things ... I'd always let him go and get away with murder sometimes, you know... um ... as I said, soft spot ... he was a soft spot, you know ... Ja, ja.</p>	<p>52. Elena had a deep affection for her brother and behind the scenes consistently covered up for him and rescued him from trouble. She did this without his knowledge and without expecting him to reciprocate but she is aware that he would have been grateful had he known.</p>
<p>53. Yes, although when we were younger, with my oldest brother I was ... we were much closer ... ja, it was like almost we'd always</p>	<p>53. As a child, Elena felt closer to her elder brother and they would sometimes go off together and not think to include Tom.</p>

<p>go like the two of us and then: “Oh, come let’s just call Tom”, you know, the stage. It was like that. So I was <i>very</i> close to my oldest brother but ... um ... I think we’d ... that changed ... there wasn’t ... I don’t think anyone was closer than anyone else for quite a few years before his death. Ja. Not in a big way or [that] we did it for years ... maybe like for a few months ... At a stage. I just ... maybe it’s just left a mark in my head because my mother ... I remember the one time she said, you know: “Tell Tom to come with you guys”, and I: “Okay”, you know. It was never a problem but we just didn’t <i>think</i> of it. It wasn’t like a <i>thing</i> and it didn’t become like a thing between us ever, you know. It was never like you don’t ask ... or ... it was never like that ... ja</p>	<p>However, this was never really an issue amongst them and they were all equally close for quite a few years before Tom’s death.</p>
<p>54. Ja. I think what I hate most about this is that the older like I get the more distant the memories will become, you know. I won’t remember his smile or the way he said something, you know, or ... and I think that saddens me most because it’s obviously distancing him from me, you know...</p>	<p>54. Elena is aware that the older she gets the dimmer her memories of her brother will become. The thought that she may not be able to remember his smile or the way he would say something is what she dislikes the most about the loss and leads to deep sorrow as she realises that this will distance him from her.</p>
<p>55. ...and like ... sometimes (clicks tongue) the way I say something it’s exactly like <i>he</i> said it, you know, or like the <i>way</i> he said it, and I <i>love</i> it. I just ... I <i>love</i> it although not everyone will realise it obviously because they don’t know him or ... but ... ag ... I <i>love</i> it, it just like ... it brings a smile to my face, you know ... Yes, that reminds me of him. I won’t say it like on purpose ... you</p>	<p>55. Elena is filled with indescribable joy whenever she utters one of her brother’s phrases or expresses herself exactly as he would have done. This reminds her of him and brings a smile to her face but she realises regretfully that time might expunge these memories and this fills her with fear and sadness.</p>

<p>know, like I'll say it because he said it, but obviously from being together and stuff you pick up things he says you know and as I say it, it will come out ... and <i>Wow!</i> (delighted; big smile) ... ja. ... but , as I said I'm just scared it becomes ... like you forget ... ja, that's very sad (long pause) ...</p>	
<p>56. Ja, and the fact that like he can't be here for like my big days, for instance, you know. I would love to ... you know, one day when I get married, I would have loved him to be there, you know... and ... ja ... that's really sad, you know, because ... Ja, just being <i>there</i> ... you know ... being <i>him</i> (laughs)... Ja ... (long pause) ... Ja, I was godmother not so long ago ... you know, I would have loved to see how he would ... you know, what he'd say, or ... you know...</p>	<p>56. Looking to the future, Elena also feels deep sorrow that her brother can never again be present to share in the celebration of important events (getting married) in her life. She realises that the missing and longing for her brother will linger on.</p>
<p>57. [the impact of the loss] I ... I guess just like dealing ... dealing with it or fighting it, or whatever, you know ... it's been very hard ... and um ... ja, I don't know. I know like ... my entire like being ... it's not been, you know, good ... <i>as good</i>, you know ... I obviously ... you know, I'm not looking as healthy, not been as healthy, what shall we call it ... you know, I think it's normal that people ... if you're not like psychologically fine it like shows on you, type of thing. And a lot of stress. I lost a lot of hair, I think, initially and stuff, you know ... um ... Ja ... it's just ... it's like a fight, you know ... it's a fight</p>	<p>57. For Elena, the loss has been a constant fight, an emotional struggle, that has affected her whole being. She is aware that she does not feel or look as healthy as she did before the loss and realises that either facing the pain of loss or struggling against it, both are equally difficult and stressful.</p>
<p>58. ... and especially seeing your parents like that, it's almost ... you don't want to accept</p>	<p>58. Particularly painful for Elena is observing how radically her parents have changed</p>

<p>it like that ... I don't want to accept them as they are, you know, these are my parents ... um ... compared to what they were, you know, as people ... and like a smile ... every time I see my mother laugh it's like, I get so <i>happy</i> because she doesn't do this, you know, often. Like to <i>giggle</i>, or like ... especially lately she's been like <i>talking</i> more and it's like: "Wow!", you know, I'm glad she can like almost touch upon it again because it's ... it's, you know, it <i>hurts</i> to see them like that ... a lot.</p>	<p>since the death and she resists these changes. She does not want to accept her parents as they have become but recently has found some inspiration and hope as she observes aspects of her mother's "old self" emerging.</p>
<p>59. I don't blame them for it, you know, I don't blame anyone for anything ... it's like, no one <i>did</i> it, you know. It's just that's the way it's become, you know...</p>	<p>59. Elena does not blame her parents or anyone else for what has happened. She realises that no one wilfully did this or wanted it to happen and she accepts that it is just the way things have become.</p>
<p>60. Oh yes, [went on holiday last year] ... well, ja ... ag, you know. You go [away], you stay for a while and you come back to exactly the same thing ... so ... it's ... it's not ... even though you might talk about it and deal with it, it's almost like you have to come back to the exact same thing ... so ...</p>	<p>60. Elena found that there was no escape from the reality of the situation. Even though she went away on holiday and spoke about the loss and dealt with it, on returning home she found that nothing had changed and that she had to face the exact same situation.</p>
<p>61. It was nice on holiday ... ja, (laughs) ... ja, even though... although I spoke <i>about</i> him a <i>lot</i>, you know, because obviously there [overseas] everybody wanted to know about him but ... and obviously seeing all my family and they all had questions to ask because I was the first one to go after his death, you know, so they'd all: "and how are your friends"; "and how is this"; and "Tell me"; ... and like one of my cousins, extremely close to me, but she like couldn't believe it ... she would like: "Tell me ...</p>	<p>61. Elena enjoyed the break away from home despite the fact that the extended family approached her with many questions. Although she did not block out the loss and discussed her brother's death at length with others, she realises that not having to cope with her parents' grief was like a heavy burden lifted from her shoulders.</p>

<p>Tell me stories”, and we would discuss it ... and, you know, it wasn’t as if I never ... as if I went there and I just blocked him off, never spoke to anyone about him. He was very much a part of that ... but it was ... I think maybe not dealing with my parents, you know, it was like ... like a weight off my shoulders.</p>	
<p>62. Although I don’t mind doing it and I do it with the greatest of ... but it is a ... a ... responsibility ... Ja, absolutely [feel the responsibility]. It’s not just something ... you know ... they really do not ask for anything. Ja ... ja [feel the responsibility] towards them, you know. Like I’m me. I just want to ... if I can ... (laughs) ...</p>	<p>62. Although her parents do not make any demands on Elena and she herself has no objection to supporting her parents and does this willingly, by virtue of who she is, she experiences it as a heavy responsibility and wants to help them as much as she is able to.</p>
<p>63. ... ja, it’s just that you don’t think that you’re that strong, you know. I’ve obviously become a lot stronger...Ja, it’s ... ja: “Okay, so take it when it happens”, you know ... Ja. I don’t know how I was that strong. I really don’t ... Godsend? ... (laughs) ... ja...</p>	<p>63. Elena realises that she is much stronger than she had previously thought. She is surprised by her strength and considers that it possibly came from a power beyond herself; from God</p>
<p>64. Initially it was difficult because you don’t ... I am not the type of person who likes to show my feelings to a lot of people and even though like my friends would come maybe the next day I wouldn’t like burst out crying or like go ... “uh! uh!” ... you know. I’m not that type of person and I like to maybe share it with one or two people I feel very close to me, you know. So in that way it was ... I think I actually put people in an awkward position because they’d come and I’d smile at them and: “How are you?”, type thing, you know, and they’d like but:</p>	<p>64. At first, it was very hard for Elena to cope with her grief as by nature she is inclined to conceal her emotions and restricts sharing deeper feelings with a few select friends. With the loss, she found that she could not reveal her pain even to close friends and she put on a façade that concealed her raw inner sadness as she held on to a pretence of “normality.” She realises that this placed her friends in an awkward position but, while they wavered and were confused, they still assured her that they were there if she needed to talk.</p>

<p>“Hang on ...”, you know, and it’s as if I don’t ... I mean I would smile at them although inside me you could see that I was hurting and like sad, you know, obviously not the same as I would <i>now</i> ... it would be ... you can’t compare ... but my friends would still tell me: “If you want to talk about it, just say”, “come and tell me”, you know, and ... I don’t know. I just don’t open up to people easily at all.</p>	
<p>65. I think I’m more now ... I’m more closed now than I was before. I don’t let people into my space easily ... like ... like personal space. You know, I’ll get along with people and I’ll speak but ... um ... not just to anyone and everyone. I won’t just go ... if I’m upset I’ll try not to show it to a lot of people, or, you know ... (Long pause). Ja. ... I don’t know what else</p>	<p>65. Elena believes that she has become more reticent since the loss and while she has not withdrawn from others and communicates on a social level, she does not easily allow others into her personal space and continues to conceal her pain from others.</p>
<p>66. I don’t know if you meet again as souls or if it happens like that but if you do I’d love ... I’d love ... to somehow be with him again if it is, because, I don’t know, if there are answers but ... these are theories; everyone’s got a different theory, you know. I don’t know, I’ve never been there and come back, you know (laughs) ... But geez, I’d be the happiest chappie! (laughs) Ja. ...</p>	<p>66. Elena yearns for her brother and looks to spiritual answers and the possibility of existence beyond the physical. While she realises that there is no definite proof of the existence of an afterlife, the thought of meeting him in a spiritual form gives her hope and sustains her; to be with her brother again would be the ultimate state of happiness for her.</p>
<p>67. And I think I am really glad that I can still look on him in a positive light, you know, with a smile on my face or ... you know, like share a story about him with ... and whatever ... ja, I think that’s very nice ...</p>	<p>67. Elena feels pleased that she is still able to view her brother positively; can share a story about him and can remember him with joy (a smile on her face).</p>
<p>68. ... and I’d hate to obviously like feel the intensity of my mother’s pain, you know</p>	<p>68. Elena is reluctant to experience the depth of her mother’s pain but she is aware that she</p>

<p>what I'm saying ... um ... Obviously when I have a child of my own then I'll understand what it would be like but ...</p>	<p>cannot possibly understand the lived experience of a mother's loss until she herself has a child of her own.</p>
<p>69. I don't want to look at <i>him</i> in that light ... I don't want to look at him as ... like a <i>pain</i>, you know ... it's obviously very confused feelings because it is <i>that</i>, and it is ... but I'd like to like remember him as a happy person ... not as a happy person ... in a happy light ... um ... you know ... you know ... and it's like ... ja, I don't know... I'm not very good with words ... Ja, ja. I want to remember him as happy as he always was, you know, the energy he had and that ... you know. I just don't want to ever let go of that and just see it as: "Tom : tragedy"; "Tom : dead", you know; "Tom : bike accident". I don't want to see that, I want to see like: "Tom : happy" ... Like he used to hoot a thousand times before he came into the house, you know, that ... that energy that he had ... he was always like, like ... ["Here I am!"] (Laughs) Ja, ja, ja! You know, and that's what I want to remember and like associate with his name, you know, and that beautiful person people saw in him, you know, and the things he did for people and like the way he touched my heart and ... um ...</p>	<p>69. Elena experiences conflicting emotions. While she feels the pain of loss, in contrast to her mother, she resists associating her brother with pain, preferring to remember him with joy. She holds on to the energy and beauty that was her brother, determined that the existing negative associations (accident-tragedy-death) will never over-shadow her positive memories of his caring and of how he had touched her life and the lives of others.</p>
<p>70. Ja, initially, ja. It was very difficult. I remember I wouldn't cry ... at all. My mother like: "Please cry." I'd say like: "I can't", "I cannot cry." I don't know why, what, how ... and if I did, I did for a little bit all by myself or maybe ... on the <i>odd</i> occasion with a friend and for so short ... I</p>	<p>70. Initially Elena could not express her grief (cry) despite her mother's encouragement that she give vent to her emotions. She feels confused by her lack of emotion as previously the slightest disappointment with a boyfriend would reduce her to tears. Although Elena considers the possibility that</p>

<p>don't know. I <i>couldn't</i> and I don't know what it was and it wasn't always like that because I remember boyfriend stories before that ... uh! If a boyfriend upset me a little bit I would be like in tears, you know, I'd get upset and cry bitterly and then it was over, you know, but with my <i>brother</i> it was <i>not</i> like that, I don't know <i>why</i>. Was it? ... I don't know if it was being strong enough but it doesn't mean that you're not strong if you cry, you know ... if you cry it doesn't mean that you're not strong, but I just, you know, I couldn't cry. I don't know why ...</p>	<p>she may have been trying to be strong, she is aware that crying does not mean that one is weak and although the confusion continues, implicitly she is aware that the quick but maudlin tears of a disappointment in love cannot compare with the dimensions of real and deep grief.</p>
<p>71. [Getting back into own career] Ja. I think I was doing something just for <i>me</i>, you know, which I know is ... I'm not really a selfish person, you know, I'll do a lot for others if I know them Um ... I don't know I guess I did this for <i>me</i>. I think I was just accepting something for <i>me</i> and not living ... ja, just for me basically ... It was a path I was taking, you know, and ... ja, I won't say specifically my goals are in that direction but it was ... it was something that I ... if I didn't do ... if I didn't do (it), I think I'd regret one day ... if I never did that for me I would turn around one day and say I should have and I didn't want to do that, for me. So I might as well give it a try.</p>	<p>71. Elena's decision to move on with her own life (career) is not without some conflict and the need to do something exclusively for herself is experienced almost as a selfish act but she realises that if she denies herself this opportunity that she may regret it in the future. She accepts that she does not have to live someone else's life; that she can follow her own path without feeling that she is somehow betraying those that she cares about (brother and parents) by doing so.</p>
<p>72. A research company. No, it's not a ... but it's marketing research, you know, it's business orientated. I did a B.Com. Ja. Interesting ... Mm. It's nice. Totally different to ... like the business. It's</p>	<p>72. Having put aside her own interests and assumed her brother's role as manager of a business, Elena finds herself confronted by another personal choice (dilemma): should she continue in the role of employer</p>

<p>different to work for someone else and [to work] for you[yourself], as well. That is my latest dilemma here (laughs) ... you know, should I work for someone else or should I work for me? I enjoy the environment, I enjoy the ... the ... it's obviously so much more like intellectual and you deal with ... the people you deal with are so much better than what you deal with in the businesses and ... um ... ja, it's a communication thing. It's just ... ja. And you feel like you're always furthering yourself in this ... obviously my career, because obviously I'm learning and it's a whole new learning experience, whereas the business it's ... you know ... Okay, I'm ... you know, I'm basically the boss ... you <i>do</i> learn I guess but not as stimulating ...</p>	<p>(business) or become an employee (own career). She feels divided but realises that she can identify more with others in her own field, and that she finds her work more challenging and intellectually stimulating.</p>
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TABLE II
Participant 3: Elena

Constituents of the Individual Situated Structure of the Loss of a Sibling

1. Experience of a Void (1,2,4,5,6,12,52)

The sudden death of her brother, two-and-a-half years ago in a motorcycle accident, turned Elena's whole world upside down. Emotionally the loss was a heavy blow for her and her family. Her brother was young, energetic, a central life force in the family so that even today Elena still feels the *void* created by his death. Home, indeed life itself, seems hollow and empty without him. While she feels the gap ("hole") more acutely during special times of the year (e.g. Christmas) and these occasions are anticipated with dread, she is aware that going away from home does not relieve the pain. Her brother's absence is felt on a physical-emotional level and the pain remains constant irrespective of where she is. Elena realises that from this pain, there is no escape. She experiences the loss as a permanent emptiness in her life and in the lives of her parents.

The void is also experienced as an empty space in the family. Elena is aware of a break in the sense of wholeness and continuity. The central role that her brother played in the family businesses meant that functionally there was a gap that needed to be filled. In her quest for stability and continuity, Elena puts aside her own career and takes her brother's place in the business. On reflection, she realises that in a strange way she was doing this for *him*: filling in for her brother, covering for him, and maintaining harmony and wholeness (picking up the "pieces") in his absence as she had done when he was alive.

2. Parents' Bereavement (3,8,15,18,19,21,38,39,41,42,43,58,59,61,62,63,68)

- *Desire to Support Parents (3,8,21,38)*

Elena's consideration and awareness of her parents' intense pain also contributed to her decision to assume her deceased brother's place and to continue with his work. Immediately after the death, Elena was aware of the tremendous emotional shock of the loss for the whole family, particularly for her mother. In her *desire to support her parents*, Elena puts aside herself and attempts to help them through the loss. She had always been aware that her mother was closely attached to her deceased brother and that she lived in the shadow of potential child loss. With the death, her mother's worst fears are realised and Elena witnesses her intense pain and distress. While her father grieves differently, Elena is also acutely aware of his silent sorrow. She realises that although he does not openly express his grief as her mother does, he too has been deeply wounded by his son's death.

Her deep love for her parents contributes to attempts to sustain them; to be there for them as much as possible.

- *The Weight of Responsibility (15,18,41,61,62)*

From the outset, Elena felt a strong sense of *responsibility* towards her parents. Because others (the extended family) were hesitant to tell them that their son had died, Elena assumed the responsibility of breaking the dreadful news to them. She realised that her parents would have to be told sooner or later and she took it upon herself to inform them of his death. In retrospect, she recognises that she may not have been very gentle in the way she broke the news but she realises that there is no easy way to impart the fact of death. While Elena is aware that her elder married brother also feels the pain and that it is not easier for him, she realises that it is "different". He can move away from the grief by returning to his own home. Whereas living at home, Elena's entire being is immersed in the unrelenting family grief and she experiences this as a heavy responsibility. Having a break away from home, for a brief holiday overseas, brings the realisation that not having to face her parents' grief was as if a heavy *weight* had been lifted from her shoulders. Although her parents do not make overt demands on her and Elena feels no resentment towards them and supports them willingly, she feels their pain and wants to help them in any way that she can. Living in the shadow of parental grief, Elena continues to feel their pain as a heavy responsibility.

- *Changes in Parents (19,39,58,59,68)*

From the moment of voicing the fact of her brother's death, Elena's experience of self, world and others is radically changed. Existentially, neither she nor her parents are the way they were prior to the death and she realises the extent to which the loss has changed her, her family and their lives. For Elena, it is particularly painful to witness her parents in their bereavement. They are simply not the people that they were before the loss and this hurts and saddens her deeply. While she does not feel that she has lost her family, Elena is aware that the loss has *changed* them radically. Whereas formerly her mother would laugh and talk a lot, now there is only deep sorrow. While Elena accepts that a mother's pain at the loss of a child is intense, she cannot accept her parents as they have become. She resists the changes that they have undergone and attempts to recover the familiar psychological order and the parents that she loves. Seeing her mother laugh or giggle as she used to fills her with joy and gives her hope as she realises that her mother can survive the loss; can almost touch on her "old" self again. Elena is aware that the changes in her parents magnify her own struggles but she does not condemn them nor does she blame anybody else for the loss. She realises that no one deliberately did this. She accepts that that is the way things have become; that death is with them and that sorrow must be endured.

- *Being Strong for Parents (21,42,43,63)*

In the face of the emotional shock to the whole family and in an attempt to retain the closeness of the family unit, Elena's immediate response was to *be strong* for her *parents* and to sustain them through the loss. Immediately after the death, Elena was surprised to find how strong she felt. She continued with everyday tasks; completed her examinations and then immediately took control of family responsibilities, formerly handled by her brother. Her awareness that her parents were immobilised by their loss and her strong attachment to her family gave her strength and provided the impetus for her to continue with life. Although, like her parents, she also lost interest in anything unrelated to her brother and realised that withdrawal was an option, she was aware that her primary attachments were threatened and she resisted withdrawing. Elena reasoned that it would be detrimental for her to sit and "cry all day" and she decided to be strong; to continue with life rather than succumb to her grief. Although she had not perceived herself as a very strong person, after the loss she adopted the philosophy of "take things as they come" and dealt with the challenges, handling situations as they arose. Elena surprised herself by her incredible strength.

Yet, while she appeared to be strong, she was aware that her inner feelings were not congruent with this perception. Deep down she felt very weak and this reality was reflected in her physical appearance. Later, she realises that she has indeed become a lot stronger but she remains confused as to how she could have been so strong, particularly soon after the loss, and believes that her strength came from a power beyond herself; that it must have been sent by God.

3. The Spiritual Struggle (20,27)

On a religious level, Elena felt changed by the loss. Prior to the death, she had been a regular churchgoer and had been close to God but with the loss she found that she had withdrawn from Him. She *struggles* with her emotions as she feels the familiar order slipping away. Although she does not feel anger or hatred towards God, she has withdrawn from Him. She experiences a distancing from Him, perhaps some disappointment in Him, and cannot feel His presence as she did previously. While more recently Elena has begun to draw closer to God and feels confident that she will re-establish the bond with Him, she remains confused and conflicted as she struggles to make sense of her changed relationship with God. She realises that she needs more time to work through this closeness-distance dimension and is aware of a *spiritually* challenging path ahead.

4. Hidden Grief (22,23,64,65,70)

Initially, Elena found it extremely difficult to *grieve* openly for her brother. Despite her mother's encouragement for her to give vent to her emotions, she was unable to cry and if she did she would do so only very occasionally and for brief moments either privately or with a friend. She feels confused by her apparent lack of emotion, particularly as previously the slightest disappointment in a love

relationship would reduce her to tears. But this was not the case with the loss of her brother. Although she considered the possibility that she was trying to be strong, she was aware that crying is not a sign of weakness. Yet she would not, could not cry. Later she was puzzled by the fact that her mother never enquired about her feelings. Taking her cue from her mother, Elena also avoided speaking to her mother about the loss and maintained a protective silence. She reasoned that by consistently being there for her mother, she would be aware that the love was there and so words were not necessary.

Though others were significant, Elena also avoided sharing her deeper emotions even with her close friends. In addition to the need to be strong for her parents, Elena is aware that, by nature, she does not share her deeper emotions except with a few select friends. However, with the loss of her brother, she found that initially she could not reveal her grief even to her close friends. She tried to *hide* her feelings and maintained a façade, greeting her friends with a smile. It was very difficult to maintain a façade, concealing her painful emotions while deep down experiencing deep sorrow. By not being authentic with her friends, she realised that she in fact placed them in an awkward position. But apart from her own reticence, Elena sensed that others felt uncomfortable with death and if ever she felt the need to speak about her brother, she would restrict herself to unemotional comments about him in an attempt to spare her friends any embarrassment. She realises that she has become more secretive (“closed”) since the loss and while she has not withdrawn from others and interacts on a social level, she does not readily allow others into her personal space. She continues to conceal her feelings but is aware that she is not being authentically herself. She has been changed by the loss.

5. *Sharing Stories (24,28,29,30,46)*

While Elena found it difficult to speak about her feelings, she welcomed the “happy *stories*” about her brother that his friends and others *shared* with her immediately after the loss. She regretted that, during the years before his death, her brother had distanced himself from the family and in her quest to know everything about him, Elena listened avidly to the stories of his friends' experiences with her brother. These narratives gave her great pleasure and were positive and meaningful, revealing significant aspects of her brother's being (what he had meant to others and how he had touched their lives) and enabled her to remember him with pride. Hearing about his experiences outside the brother-sister relationship almost extended her relationship with her brother and provided a window to aspects of her brother that she had not known. Elena eagerly held on to any small incident related to her brother as these unshared experiences broadened her knowledge of him, extending her memories and enabling her to remember him more fully. Implicitly, the stories also filled the void created by his death and the lost opportunity to get to know him better. Unfortunately, much as she enjoys being with his friends and still longs to hear more about their experiences with her brother, Elena has

become aware that it is painful for them to be with her as they immediately associate her with their lost friend. She realises that they too are hurting and in an attempt to protect them she remains silent.

6. *Maintaining the Link* (25,40,55)

After the loss Elena discovers, and his friends also notice, that she carries within her something of her brother - an “energy”, a charm, a “feel” of his that she delights in and which she experiences as a gift from her brother. In her quest to *maintain the link* with her brother, she holds on to these internalised traits that she loved so much in him, not wanting ever to let go. She realises that her brother had been so much part of her world that she assimilated many of his sayings and mannerisms. She is delighted whenever she utters a phrase or expresses herself exactly as he would have done as this reminds her of him. Having the same voice inflection and spontaneously using expressions that he would have used fills her with joy as her brother lives on in her. Her strong identification with her brother enables Elena to maintain the tie with him. She incorporates and holds on to these unique qualities of her brother just as the family holds on to him by keeping his personal possessions undisturbed. She realises that by keeping these physical reminders, the family, in effect, is also resisting letting go of her deceased brother. However, she retains a tremendous fear that time might expunge her vivid memories of her brother, that she will forget his unique way of being and this fills her with sadness.

7. *The Pain of Future Loss* (9,10,54,56)

For Elena, the *pain* and the missing are still present and she thinks constantly of her brother, aware not only of the loss in the present but also recognising the *loss of future* relationships and possibilities (when she gets married; has children, etc.) The most distressing aspect of the loss is that in the more distant future, she will lose the strong connection with her brother that she presently enjoys. As she grows older, memories that enable her now to retain the past will fade. She will not be able to remember his smile or the way he said something, and it saddens her as it will distance her from him. She fears that she will lose touch with her brother. In addition, she will not be able to visualise or relate to him as an older person and fears that she will lose him altogether. She feels deep sorrow that her brother will not be present to participate in the celebration of significant future events in her life and she realises that the missing and the longing for her brother will linger on. In an attempt to retain the closeness to her brother that she enjoyed, Elena holds on to living memories of her brother (stories, photos) not wanting ever to forget him.

8. *The Emotional Struggle* (26,57,60)

Elena experiences the loss and the accompanying grief as a fight, a constant *emotional struggle* that has impacted on her entire being. She is confused and does not know whether or not she has blocked the experience, closed off thoughts and feelings about the loss, or dealt with it. Although she is aware that with the passing of time she does not feel the pain as acutely as she did initially, it remains an

ongoing emotional fight. Just facing the loss or struggling against it has been extremely difficult. She is aware that since the loss, she has not looked or felt healthy and realises that severe emotional stress can manifest on a physical level. Particularly stressful is facing her parents' unrelenting grief. Elena is acutely aware that her own struggles are amplified by her parents' pain. Even though she went away on holiday and spoke about her brother and felt that she had dealt with her grief, on returning home she found that her parents' mourning had not abated. Facing the same situation at home, Elena feels trapped in the emotional struggle.

9. *Making Sense of the Loss* (7,28,33)

In an effort to *make sense of the loss*, Elena focuses on events in her brother's life shortly before his death. Ambivalently she admits that her brother was inclined to drive dangerously fast and she feels sad that this weakness ultimately led to his death. However, she has no anger about his death. She perceives her brother's life as a “success story”; his death almost a “good” death. She is aware that he had changed a lot towards the end of his life (last 3 months), ultimately becoming a more caring and contented person (something that many others also noticed and acknowledged) and she wonders if he had a premonition that he did not have long to live. While she regrets that her brother threw himself into life with such intensity that he had little meaningful contact with the family for quite a few years prior to his death, when his life was cut short by the accident, her brother's need to live life fully takes on a different meaning. His hunger-for-life which, in life, seemed excessive, now, in death, almost makes sense and paradoxically is a comfort to Elena - at least he had lived his allotted span to the full. She finds some solace in knowing that her brother's life had ended on a positive note.

10. *Remembering Sibling with Joy* (11,32,67,68,69)

Reflecting on her brother's life, Elena discovers positive qualities in him that set him apart from others. Listening to the opinions of other young adult males whom she trusts, affirms Elena's perception of her brother as a special person. The large number of people at the funeral also affirms what she had always known: that her brother was greatly loved and that he was intrinsically a “good” person. This is comforting to her and enables Elena to remember him with pride. She remains fondly attached to her brother and is really happy that she is still able to view him positively, can enjoy sharing a story about him and can remember him with a smile on her face. Unlike her mother, Elena resists associating her brother with pain, preferring rather to *remember him with joy*. However, conflicting feelings arise as she too feels the pain of loss but she is determined that the negative associations with her brother: accident-tragedy-death will never overshadow the positive memories of his vitality and the meaning that his life had for her and for others. She resists the negativity of her mother's pain and holds on to the happy moments, remembering how her brother had touched her life and the lives of others.

11. *The Sibling Attachment* (34,35,36,51,52,53)

Elena's *attachment* to her deceased brother was a close but ambivalent one that changed over time. When they were young children her brother often victimised her and made her cry. They played together but they also fought a lot and their relationship was fraught with conflict. Because of his advantage of age (approximately 3 years older than Elena), she frequently felt powerless in his company and, as a little girl, she sought the security of closeness with her elder brother. However, this was never a major problem and for several years before her brother's death, she felt equally close to both of her brothers.

As they matured, the age gap between them seemed to narrow and they drew closer: she could discuss certain problems with him; they occasionally went out together. Elena admits that she had a deep affection for her brother. She became his supporter-caretaker and while she often refused to do things for him, she would inevitably soften and yield to his requests - frequently against her will. However, despite the conflict between them, loyalty and affection prevailed and the bond never weakened. She would allow him to go out while behind the scenes she "covered up" for him, protected him, and rescued him when things went wrong. She did this without his knowledge and without expecting him to reciprocate, but she realises that, had he known, he would have appreciated what she did for him.

Although Elena was aware that her brother loved her deeply, they had never openly expressed their affection for each other. It was only after the loss that Elena learned, through the comments of others in whom her brother had confided, how much he respected and valued her; not only for what she did for him but also for who she was. His affirmation of her worth: the fact that he considered her to be the "best" in the family and that he was prepared to do anything for her, defined who she was and was very important to her.

12. *Fear of Death* (37,47,48,49,50)

Having come face-to-face with *death*, Elena finds it bewildering and *fears* it. Although prior to the death, the loss of a young person existed as a dreaded possibility, Elena had never seriously considered this. She knew that people died but they were old (like losing her grandmother). With her brother's loss, death becomes figural. Death had touched her personally and was no longer distant or simply part of the natural order of life. Elena's awareness of unpredictable and mortal existence is heightened. She now knows that death can come at any time and this frightens her. She questions her taken-for-granted attitude towards family relationships and realises that one neglects to spend time with significant others, assuming that because they are there, they always will be. She deeply regrets that she did not spend more time with her brother; time that has now run out. Elena comes to fear the loss of significant others. However, this is not a pervasive anxiety. Although she is aware that some people may not live to a ripe old age, her awareness of early and premature death does not extend to a

fear of her own death. However, she has become more appreciative of time spent with parents and others close to her, as she realises that they are not going to be there forever.

13. Evading Death Reminders (13,16,17,44,45)

Although cognitively Elena was able to grasp the finality of her brother's death and indeed desperately needed to know the truth about what had happened to her brother, emotionally she struggled to integrate this reality into her life. Her initial feeling at the sight of her brother after the accident was that she had never seen him looking as handsome; as beautiful or as peaceful as on that day. The dreadful fact of death (his cold and lifeless body) could not be grasped immediately and she continues to hold on to living images of her brother. Unlike her mother who visits the cemetery regularly and finds this meaningful, Elena has a strong aversion to visiting her brother's grave and cannot bear to see his name on the cross. Although she does visit the cemetery occasionally, Elena prefers to remember him as he was in life and cannot bear the finality of the tombstone. She realises that visiting his grave brings the reality of the loss home more forcefully and she resists this reminder. She knows that he is dead but emotionally she does not want to face this all the time. Her brother was too “happy” and energetic a soul to be associated with lifelessness; with death. She holds on to living images of her brother, *evading death reminders*.

14. The Desire for Reunion with Sibling (66)

Elena longs to be *reunited* with her brother and considers the possibility of existence beyond the grave. While she realises that there are no definite answers to the question of life after death, the thought of meeting him again in a spiritual form gives her hope and sustains her. To be with her brother would be the ultimate happiness for her.

15. Freedom to be Separate (71,72)

Elena's more recent decision to move on with her own life (career) is not without some conflict but she realises that if she denies herself this opportunity she will regret it later. Adding to her conflict is that having put aside her own interests and assumed her brother's role as director of a business for so long, she is now also faced with another personal choice - to continue in the comfortable role of being a manager/employer (business) or to follow her own career as an employee. She feels divided but realises that she can identify more with her own career and that she finds it more challenging and intellectually stimulating. Elena accepts that she can be *separate*; that she can follow her own path, without feeling that she is being self-centred or, implicitly, that she is somehow betraying her loved ones (deceased brother and parents) by doing so. She realises that she owes it to herself to develop further and decides to at least give herself this opportunity. However, she remains involved in the family businesses and continues to support her parents.

APPENDIX B

Interviews

Research Participant 1: Cathy

Background Information that emerged from the interview:

Cathy was 23 years old at the time of the loss of her 19 year old brother. Her parents had lost a 3 year old daughter during her mother's pregnancy with Cathy and a 2 week old infant daughter when Cathy was two years old. Cathy was totally unaware of the other losses that her parents had suffered. This information only emerged after the loss of her brother. The multiple losses in a single family had far-reaching implications in terms of the parents' ability to handle yet another loss and seem to have had a ripple effect on the participant. The "shadows" that previous losses had cast on this family were brought into sharp focus by the loss of her brother. In the interview, the emphasis on "silent grief" comes out very strongly in Cathy's situation and the need to break the silence (to speak out) is indicated by her eagerness to share her experience in an interview while experiencing great difficulty in providing a written description of her loss.

Original Interview

Cathy: "It feels like it just happened yesterday" (not recorded on tape).

"Right. I was in J. when it happened, when my brother had the accident, and I was watching a movie and they blackened the...the...[screen] and they put a notice to come to the manager's office and there was this absolute fear...you know, that...um...I didn't know my mom and dad were in D. and we'd gone over to J. to see the movie by train...and, 'how would I get...?' you know... 'what was going on?' And here I am in J. and away from home and there was this absolute disbelief, you know, you can't think. Anyway, eventually I got to the office and the manager told me that my brother had a bad accident and that friends were coming to pick me up, and...the...the...the knowing that it's very serious and...the hoping that it...nothing was going to be as bad as, you know, I thought it. And then they dropped me at the hospital and I...I can't remember if I went in to my brother...as I said, I run away. They brought a cushion that I sat on and I don't think that I...still wanted to accept...The doctor came and told me there was nothing they could do. He (brother) had damaged his liver but I *still*...you know..."

Interviewer: "Hoped..."

Cathy: "Yes, and I sort of half slept on this couch and eventually my mom and dad travelled up from D. and they arrived at the hospital. And...I don't even know what time you know and... from that moment everything became sort of hazy. Ja, ja, it is as though the reality of what happened makes you...made me...feel totally...um...out of touch, you know, as though you ...as I say, I run...as though you don't want to accept what has happened. My mother, strangely enough, she came out and told me...she came out and told me we must go home (i.e. where she and brother had been staying in J.) and then...(wept bitterly/very upset)...we went home... Anyway, at some stage...I think it must have been about nine o'clock she came and said we've got to go to the hospital. So we quickly got dressed...They went in. I sat outside..." (very upset)

Interviewer: "You sat outside..."

Cathy: "Mm...(struggling with tears) and he died while my mom and dad were in the room (weeping bitterly)...and my mother became hysterical...then they came back and we went home...What happened after that...the going home, I was like so cold. I can remember that. And there was much phoning and people coming and...I can't remember...anyone really coming up to me and saying: 'We're so sad', you know (wept). And I don't know if it was because I withdrew or because you know they...the...the...it was my mom and dad that lost their child, you know. Ja and even at the funeral, I can remember...after the funeral...it was a strange thing...you know. It was as though it

was something that happened that was not part and parcel of me, you know. It was something that I was observing. Do you understand? It was *terrific* pain that my mum and dad had and I was observing all of this”.

Interviewer: “As though you didn’t own the pain? It was mom’s and dad’s...”

Cathy: “No, no. And also no one really owned that I was part of the family. With the result that you think you are a bit of an outsider...it is...that it is those people that are pained and are so ...in sorrow, not you, and I think it becomes uh...uh...something that you...you...well up inside ... because you don’t really give yourself...you don’t really think you have the right to ...to be...you know...to be emotional about it because it is *their* son and it’s *only* your brother. Do you understand what I am saying? With the result...it was a very strange...it still feels to me as though it’s totally hazed up, you know...those few weeks of it. I can remember someone... We were sitting in the...the...the...I had a bedroom/ sitting-room and I was sitting there with some of my cousins and a person came in and said to me...I can’t remember the person, but I can remember the person saying to me, ‘I’m so sorry for you...for losing your brother.’. And I think that’s the only person...”(weeping bitterly)

Interviewer: “The only person that acknowledged your pain.”

Cathy: “Ja, that’s right, ja!...and you know when your question[naire] (i.e. research question) came and I looked at it and I couldn’t answer it, I couldn’t put it on paper because it becomes such a reality...on paper. And...but this has also given me time to think a bit exactly what actually happened, you know. How did I feel about all this and as I say, I felt like an outsider.”

Interviewer: “Um...”

Cathy: “Ja, sitting outside the whole thing but being very torn as well. And very upset.”

Interviewer: “You had the pain but did not feel justified in...”

Cathy: “Ja. I think when there is a tragedy like this each one copes with his own pain. You can’t cope with your mother’s pain, you can’t cope with your father’s. As much as you would like to, you know. I can remember going to bed and waking up in the morning and thinking it definitely didn’t happen you know, he is here, you know. Ja, and then when the funeral was over and we tried to get back into normal life. Um...I became...I tried to protect them from songs that he was very fond of, you know, and it became a weird existence because he was so much part and parcel of our lives yet none of us acknowledged him, we never spoke about him, you know. He...everyday, I mean we’d sit down to eat and we would all cry and no one would acknowledge why we were crying. I just remember once my mother said to us at the table, to my dad and I, um...that we must just think what it would have been [like] if he had killed someone...because a drunk man rode into him, ja, and it sort of...it’s a burden that at least ... he did not have to bear. And I think that was the only time that there was ever an acknowledgement about the...about what had happened. My mother on occasion became hysterical and my dad got the doctor in a few times...”

Interviewer: “Can I just check. Were you staying at home at the time?”

Cathy: “Yes, I...what was I doing? I can’t remember...It really was a terribly hazy...a time that I seldom go back and look into. I know I was at home and I stayed at home. I made a pact that I would stay with them for three years...And I stayed for three years and tried to protect them. Then they started to go to the cemetery every Sunday. And it became an absolute ritual. They’d both go off. Sometimes I’d go with...eventually I couldn’t stand the emotional strain and they’d go and they’d come back. My father was losing weight, my mother was looking terrible and one day they came back and I said to my mother, ‘This has got to stop. You’re killing dad you’re um...you’ve got other things that you must look...’ and she said, ‘I just want to tell you, my *favourite* child died!’ (very

emotional/wept)... You know when...when you're in a situation you don't realize that's just her way of hitting back, you know...at her pain ...” (overcome with emotion; unable to speak)

Interviewer: “Very painful talking about this.”

Cathy: “I think that it was devastating...it wasn't...it was hurtful...it was...When I think about it...for many years I thought I had no worth. You see, you yourself are in...I myself was feeling terribly...I was scared for what was happening to them seeing them, you know, seeing them deteriorating. I couldn't understand what was going on, because it just continued and continued. And the strange thing is that after that they came right, you know. I mean they still didn't mention him. They never mentioned him, neither did my father um...and just before my father died my mother and I sat in the lounge and I spoke about him and she cried and from then we spoke about him...that was fifteen years after he died. Um...we have never mentioned the circumstances...um...in D. they bought him a little car and the car arrived as the funeral car arrived to take him. Ja, you know it was a very, very um...um...emotional thing and to this day I cannot look at blue M...s. They bought him a little blue M... there and as we were getting into the funeral car the driver with the blue M...came from D. and...”

Interviewer: “So he was not in a vehicle when the accident occurred?”

Cathy: “Yes, he was driving my mother's car. There was a lot of guilt I had in that as well because the evening that we went out he was going to go to his girl friend by bus and I said ‘No!’ and I got quite angry. ‘We've got to go to the station and you've got to take us!’ and because he took the car he had the accident and *that* caused me guilt for *years*... That I worked through...and, I mean, I never told my parents so I haven't worked through that to that extent, you know, I think to a certain extent there is still a lot of guilt wrapped up in him having been in the car...um...But I think you've got to let go as well, you know, can't live... As I had to eventually let go of, you know...I knew my brother was my mother's favourite child, you know. She was very protective of him. He was very much like her family and he'd had a car accident before that and was in hospital for...um...”

Interviewer: “She worried more about...”

Cathy: “...about him than she did about me. Yes. She used me in many ways I think she was a very hard woman. I think...I didn't realize at that stage that she had had so many...ja!”

Interviewer: “Losses...”

Cathy: “Ja, and she was very, very hard on me. My dad also always said that ‘just keep quiet you keep the peace’, but when I was a child I didn't understand this. And the fact that she was pregnant with me when it happened to my sister then it's resentment towards me...on her part...that's how I worked it out, you know, and I think it made it easier for me to cope with what happened when I was young...”

Interviewer: “So you're saying that because your 3 year-old sister died...”

Cathy: “You know, as I (said)...you know...It actually was a very strange relationship, my mom and I. Now that she...she's 90 now, she's mellowed tremendously yet she was always very, very hard on me, she...never on my brother...it was a strange thing...but I don't think you can... you know...you must worry why. No...I just...lately I just thought, well that was the way it was and you just got to accept and just get on with it. As I say her...*her* bereavement, which I was not part and parcel of, had a tremendous effect on *my* confidence... *and* going back to how I feel about...I still think...I still grieve about him...as he was when he died...a young man, you know, and he was very good looking young man. I don't know how I feel now... um...”

Interviewer: “Before we go on to that let me...can I just check. What you said initially was that there was the fear and the shock and the unreality of the loss...”

Cathy: “Oh, Yes! Every morning, you know, you wake up and think it couldn’t have, you know, he must be here. That not wanting to accept it. Ja, I actually don’t know when acceptance came. I think for a long time after he died I’d wake up and think he’s still...and I’d hear him whistle. He loved um...um...um...motorbikes...not motorbikes, bicycles...um... He’d go on these bicycles...racing bicycles in groups with the other chaps and um...it, um... you know, there are still certain sounds that one still remembers.”

Interviewer: “So there are a lot of memories...”

Cathy: “Ja...I don’t think you can...like my father died and you don’t lose...Sometimes it dims and then other times the things that you can’t remember you remember very well again, you know. I think it depends on the normal mental state or your emotional state perhaps. You want to remember and what you don’t you don’t. And...um ...and...”

Interviewer: “Those were the feelings at that stage.”

Cathy: “Ja, ja... they...they...I can still remember that feeling of waking up and thinking it didn’t...it didn’t happen. That it was a dream...you know, and not wanting to accept...”

Interviewer: “And when the reality hit you?”

Cathy: “You know, I don’t know. I think it took time...even the...I think they left the coffin open in the church. I think it was done purposefully so that the reality could hit us. You know when someone is ill and...when my father died he was ill for some time...and...and...”

Interviewer: “That prepared you...”

Cathy: “Ja, that prepares you, but when...and I think...there it hit...home that... ‘here he was.’ And I think that is why it was done. I don’t know who decided that it should be. Perhaps the family did, you know my mother’s sisters and...[they] saw that the acceptance wasn’t, you know, there. I don’t know, but normally all funerals we went to the coffins are closed and I think perhaps the reality hit there...that ‘it’s over.’ But still...I can still remember long after the funeral waking up and thinking it definitely didn’t happen, you know, that he’s here... and then listening for the noises he used to make in the morning...it’s a...bereavement is a strange thing...its...you can’t picture the moment...I think each one...and I often wonder in small children what happens there?”

Interviewer: “Younger than you were where the understanding is...”

Cathy: “Ja, ja, there isn’t that...that...That’s very interesting isn’t it?”

Interviewer: “It is very interesting. What you are saying is that even though you had the understanding that this was final your mind couldn’t quite grasp...”

Cathy: “Yes, yes. I think the pain of the whole situation that it’s a closed thing. There’s no longer that person. You don’t want to accept and you actually...in...you look ahead at the pain that is lying ahead, do you understand, and that not wanting to accept ...”

Interviewer: “That life will never be the same without that person...”

Cathy: “Yes, yes that’s right. That you think it hasn’t happened...It couldn’t have happened, so that you don’t have to go through all that...The strange thing as well that I thought...I’ve often thought about it. It never came up in my mind that why did God do this? Ja, you know it ...I never...perhaps I was blaming myself more than God... You know, it is like a whirlpool of all kinds of things...and... after, after it sort of happened, little things would come up, you know, they’d surface a bit and then

they'd vanish in the water again that type of thing and one's ability to cope later when they appear a little longer, you know, and before you suppress it again and hide whatever you're feeling..."

Interviewer : "When you're ready it comes through and..."

Cathy: "You can deal with it a little bit and then off it goes again...you close it up...it, um... and I often wonder...perhaps it is because I am inclined to run...from emotional...In anything you know, on T.V, you know...I switch [off]...and as a child I used to cry in movies that other people never cried..."

Interviewer: "You're very sensitive."

Cathy: "Yes. And I think that when you're like that you try and escape and I think that feeling was always with me. I can remember after 3 years I went to teach at X (school). And I never ...[I never] thought perhaps I would escape it. I never had that feeling, you know, I just knew I was going. I took everything that was at home with me. The thought of getting away from it never entered my mind. I just knew that for *my* health and for my *emotional* survival I had to get away from home...and at this stage I was 25-26 [years old]...I went to X... Yes, it all went with me. It was like I packed it in the suitcase..."

Interviewer: "When you say "all" you mean?"

Cathy: "The emotions, the..."

Interviewer: "Oh, I see. So you're not talking about tangible memories of your brother or things that belonged to him."

Cathy: "No, no. I also have a little parcel of his with...with his watch, and...but I've never opened it. It's still there, it's still closed. I move with it wherever I go and...and...you know ...as I say, *running...running ...*"

Interviewer: "What I think you are saying is that you had an overload. You had just too much to cope with and you dealt with it as best you could at the time..."

Cathy: "Ja. I think so. You know I don't even know when he died. Isn't it terrible! It's a strange...as you said or as I said, it's not accepted...the reality...perhaps...I mean I used to go, even after my dad died, my mother and I used to go to the cemetery and we'd... put flowers on my brother's grave, on my dad's grave and my little sister's grave, the one that died. I mean, I must have looked at the grave stone a thousand times and cleaned it and I still don't know when he died...I think..."

Interviewer: "You're like keeping him alive?"

Cathy: "Um...And yet he was much younger than I was. We were never...just about a year before he died we started becoming friends...He was also younger...and...on...on looking back, we had very little in common. We did very little together. I was always the older one, I was always playing the piano and he had other things. He was...he also had a friend who shot himself when he was at High School...Life is so...whew! He was at boarding school, my brother, and we didn't tell him ... my mother didn't tell him, and when he came back my mother told him. He was then also in Std 6. And he just turned round and he walked out. Strange that no one ever asked him...how he felt. We were never asked you know...it was... a...a...I don't think my dad ever spoke to him or my mother about it...he...I can't even remember my mother telling him why we thought he (i.e. the friend) did it..."

Interviewer: "It was something you didn't talk about."

Cathy: “As I say, I think on looking back, bereavement counselling would have helped a lot, you know. But now even you doing your PhD on this, I’ve often thought, I wonder how parents would take to a child going for counselling. You know, it’s also still very much a new area, this counselling thing. They *counsel* children that have emotional problems but they don’t regard a *loss* as a counselling problem. You know, I see this at school as well, you know. There are two little...[no] one little girl and...both parents were killed in a helicopter accident, and I said to the school the other day ...she’s now gone to CT: ‘Is she receiving counselling?’ And they said, ‘No’, they don’t think so. And I looked and I thought...to me it’s become such an important...you know...after having gone to Lifeline and realizing what it *did* do and I think if people become more aware of counselling and as you are working on ...for children as well. Children need help because it is very traumatic, you know...”

(Switched over to side B of tape)

Cathy: “I ran...My whole life I ran away. I think circumstantial death like that is...is...is a terribly hard thing to come to terms with. I could see it in my mother as well. My father died years after my brother and there was acceptance but in a death like that...”

Interviewer: “More difficult when the person is young and the loss is...”

Cathy: “...sudden...and of a child as well, you know, of a young person...You accept when someone is older and has had a life and you don’t accept...And I think that was also a part. Well it’s harder and I didn’t want to accept...”

Interviewer: “You said that you were not particularly close to your brother in sense of ... he was younger, different interests, that sort of thing...”

Cathy: “I...Do you know, I...I often...he was quite a bit younger. I think he was 5 years younger and my interests were totally different to his. I actually can’t even remember...at school...I can remember him going to school. He went to...(gave name of primary school) and then he went to boarding school, and...I remember him as a young man not so much as a child. I remember him as a young man. I think my mother was always very protective of him and she sort of kept...um...each one had his own little world, you know. I can’t remember ever going to flick...him coming with us to flick. I went to boarding school in Std 6 and he stayed at home. Then he must have been in Std 3? 4? 2?. Then, after Std 10, I came home. You know, he was there. He was there at supper and we got into serious trouble if we weren’t home in time for afternoon tea, you know. There were times that I remember he was there but I can’t remember...ever being really close...until he grew to a young man...until he was about seventeen, eighteen, then we started chatting and...and I started picking him up wherever he was in the afternoon in the car...I suppose it was normal. I never really...He was very quiet, he had a very dry sense of humour...um...”

Interviewer: “Who was he more like?” [Attempting to get better idea of the sibling relationship but not successful – better question would have been to ask her to elaborate on the period when they “started to become friends”]

Cathy: “I don’t know, he definitely wasn’t like my mother. He didn’t have my mother’s nature...but I think he was like her family...although I don’t know...because my father...he had more my father’s nature. My mother, um...after he died she’d make remarks to me that, ‘you’re not a C----- you’re a M’ ---- you know, in a very nasty way, and my brother was a C-----, and I have a cousin in CT whose surname is C----- and she said, ‘He’s not a C-----, he’s more like his mother!’, you know (laughed). But she (i.e. mother) developed a sort of a ...After I was born, I think she had a resentment towards me and it came out even after my brother died and I think that made me even more...feel even more guilty that my brother had died. You know, that she had lost the one that she was fondest of...that she became very peculiar. And looking back I realize that it was emotional instability...I mean, you lose 3 children you can’t be absolutely normal can you? I don’t think so and I think I

experienced it. You *cannot* ...and...But as she's grown older...I think she's...let me tell you, she was hard until she was about 85. Only now between 85 and 90 has she mellowed and I think that it was also her way of sorrowing. You know, I think when you lose a brother or a sister...you know, after your [research]question came, I thought if someone had counselled me on my mother's behaviour, I think that would have been a tremendous help because you fight in the dark, you know. You have this person that is your *mother* that is reacting so *abnormally* towards you and you don't know why. And here you are, you're battling with all this pain and there's no help. And it went on after his death for years. As I say only 85 she was still saying to me... about 86...that I'm not a C... (i.e. not like her mother's side of the family) and she would say it in such a nasty way, you're a M...(i.e. more like her father's side of family). Meantime, I was so proud that I was a M...but she...she, you know, she had to break that down. Really she became...and *that* I think is a very, very important aspect of...The mother's reaction towards the child...the children that stay behind, *that* perhaps is even more important than how the child feels about the loss. To me, I think it meant...because it became an abnormal situation."

Interviewer: "And your life could have turned out very differently if your mom had been..."

Cathy: "Yes, yes. If someone had helped *her* and helped *me*. Perhaps even after my sister's death if someone had helped her *then*. But my mother's a very proud person and...I think *that* in many ways caused a lot of extra pain...*With* the loss and the guilt and everything else that came with the death of my brother, her very strange behaviour...um..."

Interviewer: "Her anger at the loss that perhaps kept her going otherwise she might have become depressed?"

Cathy: "Yes, yes and of course you don't realize that because you yourself are destroyed...I mean I was destroyed after that...emotionally, and you know what else happened? Our friends couldn't cope with our sorrow so they stayed away. So here I was left as an only child and all my friends were running away. No one ever discussed...they'd say to you, 'Have your parents got over the death of your brother?', you know. That sort of thing and um...there was no one that I could talk to...um...or ...and even tell about my mother's behaviour. Sorry, it was strange before my brother died. Ja, it was already...as I say, she was a bit unbalanced, quite unbalanced, before my brother died um...and I think it was all wrapped up with my sister's death and um...I never even knew that I had a sister that had died. I can remember looking through a photo album and saying 'Who's this?' and my mother saying, 'Oh it's just a child, a cousin', or something. Never telling me that *that* is your sister. So she was also running you know and...and...trying really...and you know you don't shake off that baggage. It goes with you. Her baggage went with her and my baggage was mine."

Interviewer: "You've been through a lot. Has this strengthened you in any way?"

Cathy: "I think it has. I hope it has made me a nicer person and not embittered me like it did to my mother, you know. She became terribly possessive of my father. It was very strange. At times I thought she *hated* me...um...Lately it doesn't worry me (laughed). I think as I've grown older...and that is what I am saying, not only does the child encounter the loss of the [sibling]...but the mother *reacts* in strange ways to the loss of a child and I think it is so important that the child be counselled to that as well...to that part of the circumstances that come after..."

Interviewer: "I think that a lot of parents don't have that energy to actually help the children although they might be aware that they need the help..."

Cathy: "No. I don't even think that the parents even realize that the child also has pain...I mean at no time would it ever...the only time, when we sat at dinner, that my mother acknowledged that we were all hurting...I think she acknowledged that my father was hurting."

Interviewer: "To get back to the anger that is also part of grief; your anger. Do you have any anger?"

Cathy: “I have anger towards my mother. I don’t have anger towards what happened. I have sadness. I am sad about what happened but I am not angry...but I *am* angry with my mother. Her reaction and her insensitive behaviour towards me and I think that is why I never ever told her that I told him to use the car. Because, as it was, I was *suffering* her behaviour and I could never...relate that...I couldn’t tell anyone until I went to Lifeline. You know they don’t counsel. You just talk and then off you go home and you battle it out, you know.”

Interviewer: “It brought things out?”

Cathy: “Ja. It brought it out and for the first time I could say that I felt so guilty and that... They asked ‘what actually did the guilt do to you?’ and I think...you know, I don’t know... It’s such a...death is such a tricky...and the sorrow that comes with it. It’s many faceted. It isn’t just *sorrow*... Ja, ja, there’s so many aspects to sorrow and as I said it’s like a whirlpool. Something comes up then... whew! its away, and then a few months later, or a few years later, something else pops up. And um...”

Interviewer: “With the passage of time things come out that maybe could not be dealt with before...Sorrow is multifaceted and sorrow must be sorrowed. I think it’s almost like you’re saying that you were not allowed to sorrow (interrupted)...”

Cathy: “I think...if I look back as to how I feel about my brother’s death, it was a great loss for my parents, not for me. It...I don’t think it was...I ever acknowledged that I had the right to cry...or I had to feel sorry for...because I was alive, do you understand? Here I am alive how can I feel sad? They must feel sad because they’ve lost...do you understand? They’ve lost a child, you...you...I was... And I think after it happened, I went into that hazy world of...of ...you’re not allowed to be sorrowful because you’re alive and it’s their child that died not yours, do you understand? Do you know that on my brother’s gravestone...(very emotional - long pause)...on my brother’s gravestone...(weeping bitterly)...I’ve never, ever said this ... on my brother’s gravestone it says...“*Our Son*”. I was there shortly after he died when we were washing the gravestone and I saw then, “*Our Son*”, and I put it away, you know, just filed it away...and it has just come up now!”

Interviewer: “You felt excluded here as well. From my understanding it was not only your parents but other people as well that didn’t really acknowledge your relationship...”

Cathy: “Ja, ja. No one ever sympathized or asked me how I felt or...perhaps they did and then I closed up, I don’t know, you know. You...you...I think you cope with it the best you can and perhaps...but I cannot remember anybody, barring that person that came up after the funeral. I remember *that* very clearly so I’m sure I would have remembered other things. I think, you know, I always got the feeling that people *outside* your sorrow couldn’t cope with ...so what they did they avoid eventually and I always put it down to that, that they can’t cope so...”

Interviewer: “They avoid...”

Cathy: “But the fact that I could remember that one person at the funeral coming I’m sure no one else did otherwise I would have remembered it...But there was...um...I think there was an awareness of my sorrow but no acknowledgement...not my mother or even my father. I think perhaps they were, I don’t know, I’m just saying perhaps they were so involved in their sorrow that um...my...I do know I was outside the whole...I was an onlooker.”

Interviewer: “You spoke earlier on about becoming an only child. How did you experience that?”

Cathy: “I experienced the attention being on me. Ja, my mother’s total absorption with me ... but not my father. My father was a very sensible man. I mean he also lost three children. But my mother became totally absorbed in...and there I think if they had been counselled, if someone had told them

how to handle it instead of becoming frightened of it and running away from it as well and in many ways becoming obstinate...”

Interviewer: “When you say that she became absorbed and obstinate was that more in a protective way or...”

Cathy: “No. It became a...I don’t know. I often thought perhaps she was fearful that something would happen to me but she never expressed it. I perceived it as a mother that is over possessive. That’s how I felt about it. She never gave me freedom to express opinions or express ideas that...she was totally irrational...”

Interviewer: “She had been a bit like that...”

Cathy: “...before my brother died...”

Interviewer: “Before your brother died and then it got worse?”

Cathy : “Yes. She became...um...And then at other times...you know it wasn’t a permanent type of thing. At times she was normal and other times she was totally irrational and my father was fully aware that there was this but we never really discussed it. I knew [that] he knew and that made me feel safe, you know. The fact that he was aware of it but we never discussed why.”

Interviewer: “He was aware because you told him?”

Cathy: “No he was aware because of her behaviour.”

Interviewer: “He could see?”

Cathy: “Yes, and he’d wink at me or...he’d, you know, he’d try...”

Interviewer: “There was that understanding...”

Cathy: “Ja, ja. I had a terrific relationship with him...if it wasn’t for him I think I would have...it was very, very trying after my brother died. She became vicious. I think she used me as a sort of a hitting ... like a boxer hits at something and she could verbally hit. It was very destructive, that’s all I know.”

Interviewer: “You dealt with a lot.”

Cathy: “But also...it was destructive in as much that, as I said to you earlier, I felt I had no worth. I...only these last few years that I felt...I am free of...of...to a certain extent confined ...whole thing put on me. As though I’m starting to be my own person, not...trying to be someone else’s person...”

Interviewer: “Trying to be the person that mom wanted? Trying to make up for the loss somehow?”

Cathy: “Ja, ja. There was very little discussion. As I say, fifteen years we never mentioned his name and each one has developed into his own little cocoon. I think my father took his sorrow into his little cocoon and my mother into hers. And there was never any open talk or...how we felt or...you know, and I often wondered, do other families behave like that?”

Interviewer: “You’re wondering how other families deal with this?”

Cathy: “So they all...um...”

Interviewer: “Families do go through the phases of grief at different times and often do not have the energy to help each other because of their own sorrow. Grief is a normal process.... It is not pathological. It is normal to feel sad. On the other hand...”

Cathy: “But I do think there is a link between your health and sorrow. I think it became a very low...um...intellectual period. A period where I cannot remember anything happening. It was a stagnant period. Um...”

Interviewer: “How long do you think you stayed with that?”

Cathy: “Years. I think a lot of this had to do with my self image. If you got a self image...a good self image, then your growth is faster. If you have a bad self image...that’s how I worked it out...you know, now that we’re thinking about it. I’ve always felt that I am not capable of much because of ... and I never even thought about it, you know.”

(A brief discussion ensued relating to a serious illness experienced by Cathy before the loss of her brother and the fact that she had not shared this information with her mother. After her brother's death, she was less inclined to discuss this with her mother and this, as well as the circumstances leading to her brother's death, have remained her secrets.)

Cathy felt that she had exhausted the topic and after thanking her for her willingness to participate in the study, the interview was terminated.

Research Participant 2: Dia

Background Information:

Dia is the younger of two children. She was 21 years old when her sister was killed in a motor vehicle accident. Her sister was 25 years old and had been married for 18 months when she died. She and her husband were driving home after spending time with Dia and her parents at the sea when the accident occurred. She was killed instantly. Her husband suffered serious injuries and was hospitalised. This happened thirty years ago. At the time of the interview Dia was 51 years old. She is married and has two children.

Dia's interview will first be presented in the language used by the participant (i.e. predominantly Afrikaans, interspersed with English words and phrases). This will be followed by a translation into English.

Original Interview:

Dia: "Wil net die agtergrond gee. Uh ... um ... Sy was baie ...uh ... ons ... uh ... on-seker van haarself. Goed. Ek dink nie onseker maar ek sukkel om 'n woord te kry daarvoor ... maar baie bevestiging gevra as sy ... as sy 'n ...'n ... Ek dink die beste wat ... Dit wat ek die beste kan onthou van haar stem was dat sy byvoorbeeld sou gese het 'nê?' En sy het so 'n naampie vir my gehad, jy weet, so dit was ... sy soek eintlik bevestiging 'nê'? Nou Goed...Aan die anderkant moet jy my ook ... ek het haar bietjie seker oordoen, ek weet nie. Jy weet dit was nou die verskil tussen die persoonlikhede. Ek het baie meer gewaag, sy sou nie gewaag het nie. Ek was ... [ek] weet ek het ongeduld ervaar en aan die anderkant het ek geweet sy's glad nie so effentjies as wat sy ... as wat ek dink sy is ... As ek baie vinnig dink ... Ek stel dit baie lomp. Ek het altyd vermoed en ek dink eintlik intuïtief geweet dat sy baie sterker is as wat dit op die oppervlak gelyk het. As sy 'n ding nie wil doen nie sou sy hom nie gedoen het nie. Nie hardkoppig nie maar ... 'she could' ... 'she could' ... ja ... en dit het baie gevat maar sy sou dit gedoen het ... 'you ... you have to push her up to that'. So sy het die voorreg gehad om bang te wees. Ek het nie want ek is groot mond ... ek het gemaak asof ek nie bang is nie. So as dit donker was moet ek saam met haar loop, jy sien, maar dit was my keuse soveel as haar keuse, so ek ... daar's geen verwyte as ek dit se. Geensins. Ek kan net half lag daarvoor ... (Lag) ... Ek besef ons het ons ... in sulke rol ... Ons het ons ..."

Onderhoudvoerder: "Julle het hierdie rolle gehad ..."

Dia: "Ja, en [dis] 'stupid' weet jy. Ek het gedink ek bewys iets en sy ... sy het die...die...die veiligheid geniet want natuurlik was dit vir haar belangrik. So as ons ... ons was net klein ... net vir jou 'n prentjie te gee van die verskille tussen die twee van ons. Sy't in matriek toe begin met 'n ou uitgaan wat saam met haar in matriek was. Ons het die gesinne geken. Jy weet, die gesinne het mekaar geken. Ook die niggies, jy weet, die tannie ... die suster van my ma, al drie gesinne het mekaar goed geken ... um ... Ek en die ou het nogal luidrugtig baie keer gebots want ons was baie dieselfde (lag). Um ... en ... en ...hy't baie idees gehad wat vir my *totaal* belaglik was ... so dat jy nie ... Goed soos, 'n meisie kan nie goed sonder moue dra nie. Jy moet darem onthou dit was 'n tyd toe ons nie eers kon ... ons moet langbroek pakke dra, jy weet. Dit was die ergste wat jy kon doen. So jy het 'n 'picture' van die ... van die tyd (lag). So dit was die tipe goed waar ons verskil het maar verder het ons eintlik baie goed klaargekom. En toe's hulle getroud ... toe's sy - sy't musiek 'ge-swot'. En toe het sy HOD gedoen, en toe't sy skool gehou ... dit kan ook wees terwyl sy ... nee, sy het haar HOD en toe het sy skool gehou. En ek dink sy was net 'n jaar en 'n half getroud toe's sy dood. En hy was nog besig met medies. Hy sou daai jaar klaar gemaak het. Hy was om die waarheid te se die ... die ... dit was 'n motor ongeluk gewees ... en ons was ... sy het saam met ons afgegaan strandhuis toe en ons was so tien dae daar en toe het hy gekom. Hy het prakties gedoen op Bloemfontein, toe't hy ook afgekom. En toe was hy 'n rukkie ook nou daar en toe het ons saam terrug gery maar hulle twee in hulle kar en ons het ... ek het nou saam met my ouers gery ... en hy wou toe gelukkig vinniger gery het as ons en ons ... ons vermoed hy het aan die slaap geraak... um ... *ek* vermoed, omdat ek kan

onthou van kere dat sy saam met my gery het, dat dit nie onmoontlik was dat toe hy van die pad af begin gaan het dat sy aan die stuurwiel gepluk het want sy was nog ... sy was geneig om dit te doen, jy weet, sy het so '*panicky*' geraak. So ek het ... maar nou ... maar ek sou nie verbaas wees nie. 'Anyway', daar was niemand anders betrokke nie. Sy was op slag dood ... en die ander (haar man) - daar't 'n dokter op hulle afgekom - en hy (suster se man) was eintlik heeltemal in 'n toestand. Hy't allerhande dinge: gebreekte been... en ... ag! allerhande goed gehad en hulle het hom toe baie gou gou B toe geneem. Dit was nou nog net anderkant C so dis 'n uur en 'n half, dink ek, se ry van B af. Um ... en 'n kar het van vooraf gekom en ons gestop en toe't hy nou gesê daar was 'n ongeluk en die vrou is ... of hulle het ... *hy't* (suster se man) blykbaar vir die ou gesê "Stop, stop die skoonma hulle", of so iets, jy weet. Hy kon nog daar ... en toe ... toe moes ons K toe gaan, dink ek ... Ja, K was die naaste lykshuis waar hulle haar geneem het, hulle het hom aangevat B toe. Toe moes ons eers K toe en ... om die lyk ... jy weet. Maar kan jy nou ... 'how terrible'. Kan jy dink vir my ouers? Toe't ons van daaraf ... dit het 'n hele ruk geneem. Snaaks ek kan 'n outjie onthou, dit was 'n predikant se seun, en hy was jonger as ek. Ek dink hy sou toe nou net begin swot, en hy't regtig ... weet jy, hy het moeie gedoen om *lank* met my te staan en gesels ... jy weet ... ek weet nie of sy ma en pa vir hom gesê: "Siestog. Praat met die meisietjie", jy weet, daardie tiepe van ding (lag). Ek onthou so ... so goed die gesprek. Hoe dierbaar hy was, jy weet, sonder om regtig te probeer te veel troosigerig te wees. Hy was net sommer dierbaar. En toe't ons B toe gegaan het en daar ook vir ure gesit by Ongevalle om uit te vind wat het nou van hom geword. En toe's ... toe't ons ... toe't my ma hulle se suster ... sy het 'n baie goeie vriendin wat patoloog is ... die 'doc' laat gou, gou kom, en sy ouers. So ons het, ek dink, omtrent 'n week in B gebly want toe's hy 'come and go' (i.e. 'touch and go'), jy weet, hy ... hy ... [het] dit ook amper nie gemaak nie ... Dis 'terrible'. Ja. Dit was ... dit was ... Ag, jy weet maar dit was 'n Volkswagen ... Ag daardie tyd was daar niks veiligheids ... Weet jy, sy't tog die veiligheidsgordel aan gehad en sy het net ... dit was al wat fout was ... sy het net hier (wys aan die kant van die nek) 'n vreeslike blou kol gehad. Ek dink amper dit was haar nek wat ... toe het ons ... toe hy beter is toe het ons [huistoe] gekom. Toe hou ons begrafenis en al - dit was 'terrible', maar my ervaring daarvan was dat ek kon uitsny - daar was mense wat my ouers as verantwoordelikheid geneem het, jy weet, wat met hulle ge-'cope' het en ek kon genadiglik een kant toe, jy weet. Ek kan ... ek kan nie onmiddelik sulke goed verwoord nie. Los my. Ek moet op my bed le. Ek wil my ding uit-'sort' - en dan sal ek ... by die tyd wat ek voel ek kan 'cope' sal ek daaroor praat, maar nie voor dit. Voor dit moet jy my los, asseblief! (lag). So ... wat vir my gered het, dink ek, dat ... dat ek het tyd gehad om alleen te wees. Weet jy, dit onthou ek, dat ek 'n paar keer hierdie vriendin van my gebel het ... uit die hotel uit. Dis reg . Ag! Dis lank terug. Vaderland! Elk geval ... toe was hy nog baie sleg maar toe moet ek my skripsie klaarmaak. So ek het dadelik 'n ... jy weet, 'n ding gehad waarin ek verskriklik moes inklim wat ook dit, op 'n manier vir my makliker gemaak het. Um... Sy is begrawe ... dit was vir my sleg dat sy begrawe is voordat haar man by kon wees. Ja, dit is amper asof hy 'n bietjie gesukkel het om ... om te 'closure'... jy weet dit was vir hom sleg. Um ... en toe ..."

Ond.: "En vir jou?"

Dia: "My ... my ouers dink ek was vir my die grootste ... ek het ... ek het 'n vriend op daardie stadium gehad maar nie ... dat ek hom so veel sou vertrou ... ek vat maar lankerig voor ek 'n ou regtig vertrou om te praat oor goed wat ek nog nie uitgesorteer het. Sulke praat (d.w.s. die onderhoud) is vir my nie 'n probleem nie, geensins, maar as ek dit nog nie uitgesort het nie ... 'emotional' ... soort van emosionele vertrou is vir my moeilik. So ek het nooit met hom regtig ... en my vriende was daar ... hulle was baie ... En van my vriendinne, ons was so vier, en haar suster het saam met my suster 'ge-swot', so hulle het haar ook goed geken wat dit dan ook nogal meer betrokke gemaak het, van hulle kant af ..."

Ond.: "So hulle was daar vir jou?"

Dia: "Absoluut. Maar, jy weet, soveel as jy 'n ander ou kan ondersteun as jy ook jou skripsie moet ingee, en jy is besig om jou troue te reel, en so aan, want hulle was toe nou heeltemal ... almal van hulle aan die reël ... en ...en ...dit was nie asof ek dit ervaar het dat hulle nie daar is nie, geensins, maar, hulle het ander prioriteite absoluut gehad. Daarna het dit vir my ... vir baie lank ... um ... was

dit vir my baie moeilik oor hoe my ouers dit hanteer het. Ek dink omdat sy so klein en fyn en dierbaar en broos en regtig 'n dierbare mens was, het ... het dit amper gegaan tot op 'n punt van verafgoden, jy weet. So veel so dat ek op 'n stadium gese het, "julle onthou verkeerd". Jy weet, 'they'... 'they'... 'they sort of' ... nie dat ek gevoel het ek, jy weet, ek kry nie genoeg aandag nie, nooit, nooit. Dit was nooit dit nie. Dit het my net 'factually' geirri[teer]... die verdraai van feite omdat daai mens nou nie meer daar is nie ... Dit ... dit is vir my ..."

Ond.: "Hulle onthou maar net die mooi goed ..."

Dia: "Ja, ja. Jy weet ... Dis te 'silly' ... dis vir my ... en dan daardie vreeslike gereelde begrafplaas gaan ... ek het sommer gou gou gese, 'nee dankie', ek het ... 'ek sal haar in my kop onthou, ek gaan nie klip toe nie'. Jy weet daardie tiepe van houding (lag). Vreeslik! En dit was vir my baie moeilik om mee te 'cope'... en hulle het dit ook baie verskillend hanteer, die twee (ouers), wat ook vir my baie ... opvallend was en wat hulle 'n bietjie ... ek dink hulle verhouding, bietjie skade gedoen het. Nie dat daar ooit drastiese probleme was nie, jy weet, die gewone verskil oor goed, maar hulle het definitief um ... My pa wou aanhoudend daaroor praat. Hy was 'n baie meer emosionele, sentimentele 'expressive' ou, en ... en ... en, ja, baie meer sy emosies uitgedruk het en my ma wou dit baie privaat hou en ek dink dit was vir hulle baie moeilik en ek het besef ... um ... dat ek sou ... dat ek dit eerder soos my ma sou hanteer as soos my pa. Ja, dis amper asof hy dit wou 'expose' en ons was nog nie reg vir die 'exposure' nie maar sy manier van 'cope' was om dit te 'expose', jy weet. So daar was 'n konflik wat bietjie moeilik was. Dit was nogal ... ja, en ... dit is ... ek meen dis altwee tiepes se behoefte en hulle het eweveel reg om dit op daardie manier te doen maar dan was daar nie ondersteuning vir mekaar nie. So dit was nogal 'n ... dit was die moeilikste van die hele ..."

Ond.: "Hoe was dit vir jou ...?"

Dia: "Op 'n stadium was ek geirriteerd met my pa. Omdat hy my gedreig het op daardie manier in die sin van hy ... hy ... hy ... hy wil goed uit my uittrek wat ek nie oor wil praat nie, jy weet ... 'he wants to talk about it', en ek wil nie, jy weet. So, ek sê nie hy as persoon was bedreigend nie maar hy het situasies geskep wat vir my 'n bedreiging was. En ek ... ek ... wou wegom. En hoe meer ek wil ... jy weet, ons altwee gevoel het ... siestog (lag), hy ... dit was 'terrible', ai mens, siestog! (lag). Dit was vir hulle verskriklik sleg gewees. Ek het daarna in J... die volgende jaar in J... gaan werk. Oe! en daardie *eerste* Kersfees, en die *eerste* verjaarsdag, ag, heerlijkheid wat 'n drama!. En *nou* nog, *nou* *nog* as jy haar verjaarsdag vergeet, en as jy die dag van toe sy dood is vergeet dan is dit so bietjie ongemaklik. Ek het dit nog nooit vergeet nie maar ek weet ek moet 'n 'effort' maak. 'n Mens sal dit seker doen, ek sal ... ek is seker ek sal ... ek onhou daarvan maar ek dink nie 'n mens moet dit al *vier* nie, jy weet. Um ... dit ... Ek sou 'n stil tyd by myself he ..."

Ond.: "Um. Maar nie ..." (onderbreek)

Dia. "Ja. Ek het verskriklik baie keer gewonder, as dit my kind was, hoe sou ek dit gedoen het. Die ander fak[tor] ... van my kant af ... die fases waardeur ek gegaan het. Ek onthou ... dit was ... (lang stilte)... Dit was nogal toe ek getroud is ... O! wag, dat ek jou eers vertel ... Dit was ... dit was 'n ding wat baie moeilik was ... om amper, nie regtig toestemming te kry nie maar 'emotionally' toestemming vir *myself* te gee om uit die huis uit te beweeg. *Dit* was baie sleg. Omdat ek die enigste een was wat oor was en ek ... um ... seker half besef het dat hulle ondersteun mekaar nie so goed nie en ek was vir hulle half 'n katalisator miskien tussen in ... was dit vir my ... ek onthou dit was vir my *verskriklik* om vir hulle te gaan sê ek wil nou in 'n woonstel intrek. Dit was vir my ... ah! ... dit was erger as om 'n eksamen te gaan [skryf]... jy weet. Dit was *erg* ... dit was regtig *erg* ... en ek het geweet hulle gaan reageer. Hulle het mekaar toe ook, verwyd nogal ... Ek onthou ... selfs daai aand toe ek vir hulle gesê het toe het hulle nogal ... net ligtelik, dit was nie 'n vreeslike bohaai nie maar hulle het so half opmerkings gemaak wat gesê het, 'Maar dis', jy weet. Hulle het definitief nie verstaan hoekom ek op my eie wil bly want daai tyd moet jy ook nou weet was dit nie 'n 'okay' ding om te doen, jy sien, en my suster het dit nie gedoen nie. Sy het by die huis gebly totdat sy getroud is. So dit was vir hulle 'n vreemde konsep dink ek."

Ond.: “En hulle reaksie?”

Dia: “Die opmerkings kan ek nie onthou nie maar ek dink hulle het gevoel ... dat ... dat daar was ... jy weet, nou dat ek daarvoor dink, miskien was dit wat hulle van die ander een se optrede gepla het, wat hulle aanvaar het het gemaak dat ek uit die huis wil gaan. Jy weet ... ek ... hulle het nie in soveel woorde ges[ê] ... jy weet in soveel woorde bespreek, regtig nie. Ek kan net onthou dat daar opmerkings was van, ‘Ja maar as ...’, jy weet ... ‘Jy maak dit ook maar moeilik’, of so iets, jy weet ... en ek dink hulle het ... dalk ... waarskynlik aangeneem ek ervaar dit, die ander een se optrede, so moeilik as wat hulle dit ervaar het - jy weet, my ma en my pa. My pa sou gedink het, ek neem aan ... dit is soos ek dit nou verstaan ... is dat, dit wat my ma ... miskien die manier wat my ma die situasie hanteer het en haar optrede daarna het dit dalk moeilik gemaak ... *vir my*, terwyl dit eintlik *vir hom* moeilik was. Ek dink nie hy het verstaan wat *vir my* moeilik is nie. Hulle het definitief nie verstaan hoekom ek uit die huis wil gaan en dit was *vir my* *verskriklik*, *verskriklik* traumaties om *vir hulle* te sê... om myself so ver te kry om te sê, ‘Nou gaan ek!’.”

Ond.: “Hoekom was dit vir jou so traumaties?”

Dia: “Um ... omdat ek dit moeilik aan hulle kon verduidelik ... um ... want hulle het my *ge-'smother'* letterlik, jy weet, ek het nie asemhaal kans gehad nie want toe was ek die enigste fokus. Eendag het my swaer vir my gesê, ‘Jy sal nooit 'n man kry nie as jy bly’ (lag). Dis nie hoekom ek gegaan het, maar (lag) hy het dit ook ... met ander woorde, wat ek nou dink is dat hy dit waarskynlik ook ervaar ... dat hulle so ... Weet jy, hulle was nie bewus daarvan nie, sekerlik nie, want hulle is die twee dierbaarste, ondersteunende mense mens seker kon kry. Maar nie, nie soveel *insig* as wat 'n mens sou gehoop het nie.”

Ond.: “Hulle het nie *insig* gehad in jou pyn. Dit was vir hulle baie moeilik en hulle kon nie verstaan wat vir jou belangrik was.”

Dia: “Ja. Ek dink nie hulle kon daarby verbykom nie. Nee, nee ek dink hulle behoeftes was waarskynlik nog heelwat groter as wat hulle *insig* was in ...in *my* situasie. Ek is seker daarvan. Dit het gemaak dat ... ek moet sê ... ek moes dit baie met ‘force’ moes ek dit van my probeer afskei. Um ... daar's nou nog onskrewe reels dat ons maar baie keer saam sal wees Kersfees. Om die waarheid te sê was ek net twee Kersfeese in my lewe nie by my ouers ... jy weet ... en dit is nie ... my pa is al oorlede maar (sug) ... dit ... dis dieselfde gevoel van ... Jy, jy het nie ... jy kan nie verduidelik hoekom ... daar's geen verduideliking wat vir hulle sal dit sagter maak hoekom jy nie beskikbaar is nie ... hoekom jy jou eie ding wil doen. So dit is ... maar ek het nogal, na my troue, het ek so vir die eerste ses maande het ek vir die eerste keer regtig gehuil daarvoor en ek kon vir my man sê dit was vir my ‘terrible’. Jy weet ... ek ... ek ... op daai ... ek ... ek kon ... jy weet ons ... hy is nie 'n groot prater nie ... maar ek kon regtig verwoord ... dit was ... O, weet jy miskien ... een, twee of drie episodes waar ek vir vyf minute lank sou kon sê dit en dit was aaklig. Dit is dit! En dit was vir my genoeg. Dit was vir my op daai stadium ... Toe's dit ‘all right’. Daarna was dit ‘all right’. Maar ek het ‘n *ge-wel-dige* angste oorgehou vir kar ry toe ... ek het dit hierdie jaar, vir die eerste keer het ek besef ... weet jy dis ‘all right’. Ek ... ek ... weet jy dis naderhand so erg dat ek gedink het, ‘Okay, nou's ons by K, ons het dit gemaak ... nou's ons by B, ‘we've made it’ ... jy weet ... ek het so afgery toe. Dit was ... dit was baie sleg. En ek ... deesdae lag ek vir myself want ek dink nog steeds dat jy gaan *net* 'n ... 'n probleem ... 'n ongeluk kry, as jy op die groot pad is. Ek sit ... baie onmiddellik my ‘safety belt’ aan terwyl ek hom hier nogal sal vergeet. So ek het ... dit het ‘ge-click’ ... Nou is daar sekere episodekies ... Ons het nog heeltemal kontak gehou met haar man - en met ... met ... hy's toe weer getroud - tot op 'n stadium en ... toe ... ag die verskille wat ek en hy gehad het het nooit enige iets met my ... my suster te doen gehad het. Ek onthou dat ons in die kar klim na die ou vir ons gesê het en ons het so 'n paar kilometers gery, toe het my ma vir my pa gesê, ‘Jy sal nooit daai ou verwy’, en dit was ... dit was haar houding dwarsdeur. My ... my ... my pa was nogal half, half die emosioneel ou wat dit sou kon ...jy weet, ‘Jy’ t haar nie goed genoeg opgepas nie’, daardie tipe van ding. My ma is die meer logiese een wat ge ... jy weet besef het, ‘Maar, jy weet, sy’s vir hom net so

belangrik’, en hy sou ... ten alle koste sou hy ... jy weet, dit was vir hom *erger* as vir enigiemand anders.”

Ond.: “En vir jou? Hoe het jy gevoel?”

Dia : “Nee. Nooit. Nooit. Definitief nooit [verwyd nie]. As daar enige, enige iets is wat ek vir myself weet ek kon dink is dat sy aan die stuurwiel geruk het. Want ek het nooit gevoel hy't te vinnig gery nie, hy't te stadig gery ooit nie, maar, 'if he could have done anything better he would'. Jy weet. Hy was *mal* oor haar. Definitief nooit, nooit, nooit dit. Ek het baie keer daarna gewonder hoeveel hy haar sou domineer ... Hy kan emosioneel hard wees en dit het ek baie keer oor gewonder en baie keer gedink miskien is dit maar goed. Jy weet daar was ... daar was sekere optredes met die ... met die ander vrou wat ek gedink het, Whew!, as dit my suster was sou ek nie, waarskynlik nie, stil gebly het. Um ... so ek ... mens voel verskillend op versillende omstandighede jy weet. Ek meen dis erg op 'n stadium dan gebeur iets dan dink jy, ag weet jy dalk, um.... 'it was better', jy weet. 'You view it that way'. So die ... hulle het nie kinders gehad nie so dit was nie ... Um ... en met die ... met my troue moet ek sê dat ek haar nogal begin mis maar jy weet hoe gaan 'n troue, dit is so ... meer met die beplanning as met die ... maar ons het nooit ... ons was te ver uitmekaar uit nog op daardie ouderdom, daai vier- vyf jaar, en ons was te verskillend, dat, dat sy regtig vir my 'n 'pal' was. Ek besef dit sou later gekom het. Ek het baie keer gewonder wat sou die situasie gewees het toe ek kinders gekry het, byvoorbeeld. Het ek gewonder hoe sou ons ...um ... hoe sou die verhouding verander het en ... en toe my ouers nou begin ouer word, het ... het ek baie keer gewonder hoe ... jy weet, hoe sou sy dit gesien het. Um ... eintlik kon dit moeiliker of makliker gewees het, jy weet, daar is verskille altyd oor hoe jy situasies hanteer so daar sou definitief *groot* verskille gewees het. Ook omdat die ... haar man 'n baie moeilike ou is. My man is 'n heeltmal rustige ou. Hy sal ... hy is entlik nie 'difficult' nie, nie omdat *ek* so sê nie maar dis hoe mense hom ervaar. Hy is 'n baie rustige ou. Hy val in by dinge en as hy dit nie wil doen nie, dan sal hy dit nie doen nie en hy gaan nie 'n lawaai daaroor maak nie, so ... 'he gets away with things' (lag) in die sin van goed doen wat vir hom onaanvaarbaar is. Um. um ...die ... die situasies wat ek nou aan dink ...wat ek ook nou die aand aan gedink het (nadat ons telefonies gepraat het) ... wat vir my interessant was toe ek dit besef. Ja, ek was op 'n stadium ... het ek besef dat my vriendinne met susters het ek so half ... weet jy, dis baie lekker, ondersteuning ... en dan het ek aan *my* suster gedink en besef maar dit sal nie so gewees het want ons was te verkillend. Um ... ons sou, ja, wel daar wees vir mekaar maar ons het geen ... daar sou min van saam doen gewees het. Ons het net nie dinge op dieselfde manier gedoen nie. Maar, jy weet, as mens ouer word ... ek weet nie. So daaroor het ek nogal gewonder en toe my pa dood is ... in die hospital was en so aan ... toe het ek ook besef dit sou waarskynlik makliker gewees het . Ek het nou Maandag 'n idee gekry dat ek dink my suster sou haar (d.w.s. ma) baie beter ondersteun het omdat hulle baie *nader* aan mekaar was op 'n manier, en tog ek weet nie of sy dit so ervaar het ... my ma ... ek weet nie. Moet haar vra! Snaaks, ons praat nie oor sulke goeters nie (lag). Is dit nie snaaks hoe jy ... Ek weet nie as ek sien hoe my ... hoe *my* dogter ... O ja, dit is 'n ander ding dat ek *nou* besef dat die ang wat ek gehad het so deur die tyd opgebou het van, 'whew!', jy weet, ek gaan op 'n stadium alleen sit. Ek meen 'n man is mos nie famielie nie. Op die ou end 'he has a choice', jy weet hy hoef daar te wees of hy hoef nie daar te wees nie en jou suster *moet* daar wees, jy weet, en jou kind ...”

Ond.: “Sy bly tog altyd jou suster.”

Dia: (lag) “Ja, ja. Of sy lus is om te loop of nie, sy gaan nog ... (lag) ... maar my dogter het nogal, dink ek, baie in daardie rol ingegrooi van ... van ... jy weet, ons is baie, baie 'close'. Ons het baie dieselfde humorsin ... ons deel baie ... ons is baie verskillend ook. Sy is 'n 'performer', ek sal liewers asseblief agter die gordyn staan, maar (lag) sy verstaan baie goed ... so daai ... en party keer doen sy dinge en ek het baie hard gedink toe sy musiek ... toe sy gesê het sy wil musiek 'swot', of ek haar probeer, jy weet, daar in ... Dit was glad nie. Ek het vir haar gesê ek weier, sy kan nie musiek neem ... toe sy op skool was. Um ... want ons het 'n sessie gehad, jy weet, toe sy klein was en sy wou nie oefen nie en toe kom sy in Standaard 6 toe sê sy sy wil alweer. Toe sê ek, 'Nee, ek is jammer. Jy het jou kans gehad, nou is dit verby!' Maar toe na so 'n ruk ... intussentyd hoop ek sy wil want sy is so musikaal ... ek kan sien dat die kind self ... weet dis 'n ... dis 'n ... en toe regtig het sy weer

teruggekom en gesê, 'Nee regtig', sy wil regtig. Toe sê ek, 'Okay as jou punte dieselfde is en ek hoef nie vir jou te sê gaan oefen'... ek het daarna nooit vir haar hoef te sê sy moet gaan oefen. So ek het nogal daai uitgesorteer van dat ek haar nie geprobeer in 'n rigting ... um ... ek het haar eintlik ontmoedig. Vir haar gesê, 'Jy moet baie mooi dink. 'n Mens moenie jou stokperdjie jou rigting maak nie', want sy stel nie vreeslik in onderwys belang nie. Maar, maar weer ... jy weet, selfs met die musiek ... My suster en ek ... sy het geblad lees. Baie gemaak wat die boek gesê het. Ek het die boek gekyk en dan het ek, 'Ja, okay. Ek dink dit klink so', en dan het ek my ding gedoen, jy weet, en duidelik nie so ver gekom nie ... so haar manier is ... (lag). Ja. 'She was very willing to ...' Ek dink die ... die ... jou ... jou ... die persoonlikheidsverskille, dink ek, tussen die 'siblings', en die posisie in die gesin wat ek sou sê is baie belangrik. En dan ek dink, die ouderdom waarop dit gebeur ... jy weet as altwee nog steeds in die huis is, dan is dit 'n dag vir dag ... en dit was amper wat ... hoe dit vir ons gevoel het want ons het 'n vakansie saam met hulle gehad het."

Ond: "Vir daardie rukkies was sy by julle."

Dia: "Ja, ja . So dit op sigself, net die terugkom huistoe is al 'n bietjie van 'n afskeid weer want hulle was so kort getroud en ... um ... daar was nog 'n ding wat ek nogal gedink het ... ek dink daar's ... daar's waarskynlik 'bonds' tussen 'siblings', jy weet, as daar meer as een in die huis is dan dink ek is dit ... is dit ..."

Ond.: "Het julle daardie 'bond' gehad? Was dit anders toe julle ..."

Dia: "Um ... Weet jy, omdat ... omdat ons altyd met die niggies, met die suster's (ma se suster) se kinders ook alles saam eintlik gedoen het, was hulle die *groties* en ons was die *kleintjies* so bedoelende dit was ... ek het 'n neef gehad wat net so oud is soos ek en 'n jonger nefie. Dis die twee wat dood is. En die ouer suster en die een wat presies so oud soos my suster was, hulle was altyd saam. So ons was die *kleintjies*. So ons het ... die spelery het dan altyd gegaan ... as hulle sal kuier, het ek saam met die seuns gekuier en sy saam met haar ... so ons het ook nie daar, jy weet, daar ... ek dink ons het daar mekaar nogal 'n bietjie..."

(Onderbreking - Dia maak opmerking dat die band amper vol is)

Dia: "Um ... Daar was nog een ding wat ek besef het ... [ek vergeet] dit sal nou, nou kom..." (lang pause)...

Ond.: "Om terug te gaan, julle het nie baie saamgespeel nie. Sy was nie eintlik die ouer suster in die sin van besluite neem...?"

Dia: "Nee. Sy was die ouer suster met 'n sin van verantwoordelikheid. Um ... Dit was 'n verantwoordelikheid omdat sy so bang was om fout te maak wat my natuurlik vryer gelaat het ... toe maak ek 'n fout! jy weet. So ... ek bedoel ... jy weet, al bietjie ... so daai ... as ons ooit konflikte gehad het was dit op daai, omdat sy my probeer keer het want ek het haar getreit[er] Omdat ... wel dit was 'fascinating' as sy 'panicky' raak oor ek nou 'n ding wil doen wat ... kyk ek praat op klein skaal ... ons was *vreeslike* beskaafde ou dogtertjies, jy weet. Ons het nooit ... (lag) ... so dit is baie subtiel wat ek nou van praat ... ek wil net verduidelik hoe was die situasie. My ... my ouma het byvoorbeeld gese, 'She was not made for this world', en dit was omtrent die ding, jy weet. Sy was baie anders. Sy ... sy ... ek dink as 'n *kleintjie* ... (afgelei deur die bandopnemer) ... Wat het ek nou gesê?"

Ond.: "She was not of this world"

Dia: "Ja. Toe sy heel klein was het sy asma so nou en dan gehad. So ek dink sy was 'very protected.' Nie dat ek dit so ervaar het nie. 'I was on my own mission', ek dink ... ek was te klein en 'stupid'... Um..."

Ond.: “So jy sê die verskille tussen julle en ...” (poging om op te som onderbreek deur Dia)

Dia: “Ja. En as jy my hierdie selfde [vrae] ... [as ek] hierdie situasie gehad het vyf jaar na sy dood, sou ek heeltemal ander goed waarskynlik ... ek weet nie ... waarskynlik heeltemal anders ... want ... die ... die ... Nee, ek sal tog nie vir jou ... miskien oor ek ... ek was altyd bang oor hoe sal dit wees as ons ... jy weet dis nogal 'n ding, dat 'n mens vreeslik baie wonder hoe sou sy gewees het nou. Want jy onthou haar met haar jong ... alles, jy weet, en as ek moet dink hoe my persoonlikheid verander het ... ‘maybe not totally’ ... (lag) maar baie, baie. Baie geduldiger, baie minder ... jy weet. Ek kan dink dat sy waarskynlik baie meer self vertrou ... jy weet ... baie meer ‘assertive’ selfs, sommer makliker ‘assertive’ sal gewees het want dit was vir my ... ek onthou ... interessant ... ek kon haar *nooit* sien as iemand wat sal skoolhou. Wat sal kan ‘cope’ met 'n hele klasvol nie want ek se skool kinders is vir my baie bedreigend om mee te ‘cope.’ Jy weet die studente is 'n ander saak, maar skool kinders bly nog altyd vir my ... en ek kan onthou dat ek gewonder, hoe op die aarde! En sy het aangegaan. ‘Okay’, goed dis kleiner klasse want dis musiek, maar aan die ander kant is dit klasmusiek waarvan nie almal hou nie. So dis 'n ... en ek ... ek kan nie onthou dat sy gekla het dat dit vir haar onhanteerbaar was nie. Dit is hoekom ek, jy weet, half altyd die ‘feeling’ gekry het van as sy wil ‘cope’ sal sy ‘cope.’ Sy was definitief baie sterker en ek weet dat ... dat ek klein mensies nooit onderskat nie en ek dink ek baseer dit op haar en toe later op X (vriendin) ... en my ma. My ma is baie klein. Klein, klein... klein asempie. En *ek* weet jy moenie klein mensies onderskat nie (lag). ‘Physically timid doesn’t mean anything!’ (lag)... (lag aanhoudend) Nou dat ek daaraan dink, het sy in my bewussyn gegroei.”

Ond.: “That's interesting. It's amazing how much we learn from our siblings.”

Dia: “Isn’t it! O, maar ek dink jy maak ook ‘assumptions.’ En stillerige mense moet jy ook nie onderskat nie. Dit is ook... ‘I think, basically, that was based on my knowledge of her strength ... I think.’ Daar is regtig geweldig ondersteuning in die familie en vriendekring vir my ouers en vir my. Ek dink dit is ook 'n baie ... baie belangrike ding.”

Ond.: “Jy het gese dat van die begin af het iemand saam met jou gesels.”

Dia: “Ja. Die vriendin van my ma ... sy's nou hier ... sy is nou net mooi 'n jaar dood en ek het 'n geweldige spesiale gev(oel) ... jy weet ons het baie goed ... klaarge[kom] ... Eintlik wat gebeur het is haar ouers ... ek het ... um ... my pa se ma het nog geleef dis nou die ouma X en dis al ouma of oupa wat ons geken het, maar *die* vriendin se ouers het op 'n stadium besluit ... die vriendin en die twee susters, ons drie gesinne was altyd saam maar sy was nooit getroud nie en sy het die twee ouers gehad. En hulle het ... was soort van vir ons almal ouma en oupa maar van die hele lot het hulle blykbaar, vir een of ander rede, het hulle besluit ek is hulle kleinkind. So dit was ... almal het dit so aanvaar daar was nooit enige probleem wat ek kon agterkom nie. So sy't tot 'n mate ... ons het haar ouers gedeel, jy weet, wat die ander ... wat die ander niggies en nefies nie gedoen het nie. En sy was 'n tipe persoonlikheid wat ... as daar 'n *krisis* was, was sy daar. Sy het nooit regtig vreeslik ... ek dink, ja, weet jy, ek dink sy was nogal vir my 'n *ma* ... 'n ‘*idol*’ op 'n manier ... want sy het nooit gepraat oor dinge nie, ‘but she acted’ ... sy was *daar* jy weet ... sy was altyd ... *dit* het sy my geleer van vriendskap wat jy nie kan ... jy sal nooit weer maklik by ... by ... of jy kry dit nie in baie mense nie ... daardie onvoorwaardelike vriendskap. So sy het onmiddelik alles neergesit en vir die suster gese, ‘ek ry, ry jy en jou man saam.’ En ‘obviously’ het hulle toe saamgekom B toe. En hulle was saam met ons daai ... daai week ... daai paar dae ... ek dink nie dit was 'n volle week nie. En dit was soos ... jy weet hulle het onmiddelik gery, wat wonderlik was. En dit het *herhaaldelik* gebeur ... jy weet. So daai ondersteuning was daar en dit was baie waardevol. So van my kant af het dit die las van my afgeneem want ek het al gevoel, jy weet, nou moet ek hierdie mense dra op 'n manier. Hulle het nie die energie regtig om ... en ek dink seker maar uit die aard van my persoonlikheid het hulle ... ek het nie baie gevra nie ... ek het juis gevra dat hulle my los. Jy weet want hulle kan aangaan en ‘cope’ met hulle probleem en ek het ‘ge-cope’ met myne...”

Ond.: “Jy wou op jou eie manier ‘cope’.”

Dia: “O, absoluut!”

Ond.: “So daar was nie baie met jou te doen ... die ondersteuning?”

Dia: “Bra ... regtig. ‘Okay’, nee ... Ons, ons het saam reelings getref en sulke goed maar nooit, nooit gevra hoe voel 'n mens daaroor nie. Genadiglik nie ... dit sou baie erg gewees het. Maar aan die anderkant my ma was nie 'n vreeslike prater nie en my pa was nie ... um ... um ... eers dit uitsorteer. Eers... eers uitvind wie fout gehad het ... alhoewel sy sou altyd eers gedink *ek* die fout gemaak het ‘want ek ken my kinders goed’ (lag). Maar sy is absoluut daarvoor ... sy was ... jy weet, ‘sort die ding uit.’ Jy kan ... jy kry die prentjie van hoe moeilik dit vir hulle twee was en ek het gevoel ek staan in die middel. En ek dink as daar ander kinders was dan sou dit anders gewees het ... Anders hanteer het ... (ingedagte). Ek het ... nou ... toe ... my neefs is dood toe hulle nou klaar getroud is en die manier waarop haar suster dit hanteer, my ma se suster dit hanteer, en die manier waarop sy (Dia se ma) dit hanteer het, was vir my totaal al ... verskillend. Alhoewel, nie soseer die twee susters, as die twee gesinne nie. Maar nou, die kinders was *ouer*, jy weet. Ek dink dit maak 'n *groot* verskil.”

Ond.: “You just feel ...”

Dia: “Ja, O ja. Hy was 'n *dierbare* ou gewees ... ek het die dag toe hy dood is, toe besef ek ... die een ou wat onvoorwaardelik altyd ... jy weet dit is die ‘stupidist’ ding ... altyd my kant sal vat en nog verskoning vir my sal soek, is nie meer daar nie (lag). My ma sal ... um ... um ... eers dit uitsorteer. Eers... eers uitvind wie fout gehad het ... alhoewel sy sou altyd eers gedink *ek* die fout gemaak het ‘want ek ken my kinders goed’ (lag). Maar sy is absoluut daarvoor ... sy was ... jy weet, ‘sort die ding uit.’ Jy kan ... jy kry die prentjie van hoe moeilik dit vir hulle twee was en ek het gevoel ek staan in die middel. En ek dink as daar ander kinders was dan sou dit anders gewees het ... Anders hanteer het ... (ingedagte). Ek het ... nou ... toe ... my neefs is dood toe hulle nou klaar getroud is en die manier waarop haar suster dit hanteer, my ma se suster dit hanteer, en die manier waarop sy (Dia se ma) dit hanteer het, was vir my totaal al ... verskillend. Alhoewel, nie soseer die twee susters, as die twee gesinne nie. Maar nou, die kinders was *ouer*, jy weet. Ek dink dit maak 'n *groot* verskil.”

Ond.: “Hoeveel ouer was die neefs?”

Dia: “Wel, jy weet, sy was ... sy (suster) was nou net uit die huis toe sy dood is en die neefs is dood ... die oudste ou ... ons was seker omtrent vier ... twee-en-veertig, drie-en-veertig daar rond en die jonger outjie ... hy was so vyf jaar jonger as ons en hy was seker in die dertig miskien, maar hulle het altwee gesinne gehad het met kinders en was lankal uit die huis ... alhoewel nee, ek jok. Die nefie was nie uit die huis nie. My ma se suster het nog saam met hulle in die huis gebly. Hulle het 'n woonstel ... haar man was dood toe ... so hulle ... ja, hulle was eintlik nog daaglik saam. Maar dit was vir my opvallend oor hoe die persoonlikheid van die mens ... alle mense in die gesin ... die persoonlikhede, veral die ouers, in die gesin, hulle manier van dit hanteer bepaal grootliks hoe *jy* dit ervaar en die ... en die ... ‘Okay’ hoe jy ‘cope’ daarmee is sekerlik nou maar jou saak, maar ... maar die eise wat aan jou gestel word, bo en behalwe die feit dat jou broer of suster dood is ... die onmiddellike eise ... dit word bepaal deur die persoonlikhede van die ander mense in die gesin ... en dit kan ‘even more taxing’ wees as die feit dat jy nou 'n verlies gely het, jy weet. Dit was 'n ding wat ek agterna besef het ... *dit* was vir my die een ding wat uitgestaan het. Ek dink ... ek dink nie enige iemand kan se my ouers was, jy weet, ‘outrageously’ dit of dat nie. Dis net, ek moes ‘cope’ daar ... ek moes ‘cope’ op die manier wat hulle ‘cope’ ... en dit was vir my 'n *dubelle* ding. Jy weet soos ... stel jou voor jou seun het 'n ... verloor 'n vriendin. ‘You cope with it the way *he's* coping with it’ ... al was sy ook 'n baie dierbare, jy weet, persoon wat jy geken het. Dit was ... ja, jy weet, dit het oor en oor en oor gebeur ...”

Ond.: “dat jy die pyn van jou ouers gevoel het, en hoe hulle daarvoor gevoel het, het jou ook ge-afekteer - jou hele ‘mood’.”

Dia: “O, absoluut. Ja, ja. En dit stel *eise* ... en ek neem aan dat as jy meer kinders is dan sou die kinders kon half mekaar *begryp*, jy weet, en half saam dra aan daai ding van: ‘Kom ons help ma en pa ‘cope’.’ En my ma en pa dink ek nie is ... hulle is nie eintlik vreeslike ... ons is 'n baie bedaarde famielie (lag) ... so, jy weet, as ek van hulle praat ... is ... is dit baie subtiel (lag) ... maar dit het vir my ... dit het die eis aan *my* gestel.”

Ond.: “Dis hoe jy dit ervaar het alhoewel eise nie direk aan jou gestel...”

Dia: “Nee, nee. Nee, glad nie. Nee!”

Ond.: “Dit was jou gevoel.”

Dia: “Ja. Ek het aan die ... ek het klaar gemaak (met studies) ... dit (die ongeluk) was die Julie in my vierde jaar ... toe het ek die Desember klaargemaak. Ek het werk in J...gekry maar ons het gery. So ek het daarem in die huis gebly en daai (volgende) Oktober, *dit* was nogal die eerste ding. Kyk, juis die vriendin waarvan ek nou gepraat het, het ons besluit ons gaan oorsee. Toe was die rand so goed, ons praat nou die dag daaroor. Dit was sewentig sent teenoor die dollar...[Nee] die *dollar* was sewentig sent teenoor die rand. So dit was ... dit was 'n ding wat ons graag wou doen en sy (die vriendin) was toe al klaar daar. Om net daai drie maande weg te kom was ... daar was nie vaste adresse nie en dit was vir hulle seker baie erg maar dit was vir my baie ... Ek wou net 'n bietjie net ... uit die ... 'n bietjie uit die vashou want die vashou het begin al hoe erger raak. En toe's ek weer terug ... Desember dink ek, en in 'n woonstel ingegaan. Ek het baie keer gewonder as ek nie die enigste kind was nie, ek is seker dit sou 'n makliker situasie gewees het. Baie keer dat jy wonder hoe ... hoe sou dit gewees het as sy nou daar was en soos ek sê ek het baie ... baie positief en baie negatief. Ek besef dat daar dalk baie struweling sou gewees het omdat daar twee gesinne sou gewees wat misk[ien] ... Jy weet ons gesin wat ... ek en my man en die kinders sou moes ‘cope’ met haar en haar man ... Dit is interessant toe dinge vreeslik verkeerd geloop het tussen hom en sy tweede vrou ... sy't bietjie probleme gekry met dwelmmiddels en goed, jy weet. Nee, nie dwelms nie... ‘depression drugs’ ... Wat noem jy dit?”

Ond.: “Anti-depressants; medication?”

Dia: “Medication, ja, dis hy. En toe's hulle geskei en hy's nou weer getroud en nou ... hier seker einde laas jaar, toe's die een niggie wat so oud soos my suster was, se man ... wat hulle almal saam - ek praat van my swaer en my suster en sy en die niggie se man - was saam in Matriek. Dit was 'n groep wat ek baie goed geken het ... wat almal ... jy weet dit was 'n baie bekende groep ... vir mekaar. Toe's die man van haar dood en dis ... hoe kan ek sê ... dis amper soos 'n reunie. Jy weet, toe's al die vriende weer terug. En toe het dit my weer opgeval hoe verskriklik hierdie derde vrou weer... lyk soos my suster; klein en donker en fyn en, jy weet ...”

Ond.: " ‘Weer?’ Was die tweede vrou ook soos sy?”

Dia: “Nee. Glad nie. Sy's pragtig so lank ... maar baie jonk ... ek dink hy het gedink miskien kan hy haar ‘mould.’ Dit was vir my interessant net na die ... na die ongeluk, het ek baie keer ... moes ek ... ek het tussen klasse na hom toe gegaan en gehelp met oefeninge en so aan, maar ek het geweet dit gaan vir hom oor praat, jy weet. Dit was vreeslik aaklik vir hom. Hy het lank in die bed moes lê. Hy het 'n breek gehad wat baie probleme gegee het. Um ... so dit was ook 'n ... dit was ook iemand ... omdat ek en hy vriende was eintlik, moes ... moes ek hom ook half ondersteun. Jy weet dit was ook ... ook 'n ander ... 'n ander situasie.”

Ond.: “Dit lyk asof jy het baie van die verantwoordelikheid oorgeneem ...”

Dia: “Dis hoe ek dit belewe het, jy weet. En ek dink, uit die aard van my persoonlikheid, ek kan nie ‘cope’ ... ek kan nie maak asof ek nie ... of ek kan nie *toegee* ... ‘admit’, dis die woord. Ek kan nie dat ek nie ... dat ek nie ‘cope’ nie want die oomblik as ek dit doen dan vou ek heeltemal ... jy weet ... vir 'n ruk lank moet ek ... my ... my ... my ‘mind’ moet oorneem eerder as my emosies. Ek meen ... ek moet my daardeur dink, nie ... ja, ek dink, kognitief daardeur kom. Um ... en ek dink dit was deel van die proses om dit te ... dit was erg, ek kon nie onmiddelik ‘cope’ nie. Ek sou in elk geval op daardie stadium met niemand daaroor kon gepraat het nie. En ek dink *daar* gaan dit ook vreeslik verskil ... want seker van die behoeftes wat ... jy weet, die ... die persoonlikheid sal bepaal watter behoefte het jy. Wat sleg was van die eerste ervarings van iemand wat dood is om jou, ek dink die ... die oupa, die vriendin se pa wat ek 'n ‘oupa’ genoem het... Hy was op daardie stadium die enigste een wat ek ooit in my gesin ervaar het en dan die vriendin se suster. Sy is ook in 'n motorongeluk dood ...

en ek dink die skielikheid daarvan ... dis die ander ding wat ek al gedink het ... um ... die manier waarop hulle dood is ... um ... sal ook seker 'n groot verskil ... Jy weet, as 'n ou siek is vir 'n lang tyd dan's dit heeltemal iets anders ... as hierdie onverwagte ... veral as daar geweld by is kan dit nog aakliker wees, jy weet. Weet jy dat ek altyd gesê dat ek ... ek ... ek ... en ek het dit definitief gevoel ... 'I honestly felt', 'Why not...why her and not me.' Ek meen, ek was nie in 'n verhouding nie. Ek was nie getroud nie. Ek was amper 'disposable' op daaie stadium. Want, dit sou nie vir almal so erg gewees het nie ... um ... natuurlik ek is nie so 'stupid' nie ... (lag) dit sou erg gewees het (lag) ... natuurlik sou ... So wat ek bedoel is dat hulle sou sleg gevoel het vir 'n tyd lank, jy weet ... niemand sou enigiets ... Hulle het baie meer realisties geword later. Onthou dat ek vir hulle gesê op 'n stadium, 'Nee wag 'n bietjie. Julle is besig om hand uit te ruk hier.' Maar ek het werklik gevoel ... as ek ooit enigiets skuldig gevoel het, het ek skuldig gevoel omdat dit nie *ek* was [nie], omdat sy nou net getroud was, net gekwalifiseer was. Ek was nie seker oor wat ek wil 'swot' nie, niemand ... of wat... watter werk ek wil begin doen nie ... of ek daai tipe werk wil doen nie. Ek was nie in 'n verhouding wat êrens heen gegaan het nie, so jy weet ... dit sou sommer logies gewees het. Ek dink sy ... sy was mos dalk ... so dit was die enigste wat ek gedink het, jy weet."

Ond.: "Die enigste skuldgevoel was die feit dat jy oorleef het ..."

Dia: "Ja. Ek sou nie sê ek het regtig skul-dig (gevoel)... hoe sal jy dit beskryf ... maar ek weet ek het sulke 'thoughts' gehad ...wat ... jy weet, as *ek* nou die planne moes maak sou ek hulle *so* gemaak het ... jy weet." (lag).

Ond.: "If you could!"

Dia: "Ja. (lag). En dit was 'n ander ding ... die godsdiens. Ek het gelukkig op 'n stadium so ver gekom wat ek besef het, ek *mag* kwaad wees. Ek *mag*, maar dan ek moet nie oor God skinder nie, ek moet dit vir Hom sê. Dit was vir my 'n groot verligting. Daai ervaring dat, 'Okay', jy mag kwaad wees maar dan draai jy nie weg nie en praat agteraf van ... die ... die ... die ... wat die ...wat die ... wat die mag het, het verkeerde goed gedoen en daarom haat ek Hom, en sulke goed. Jy weet. Ek het genadiglik besef dat jy kan ... en dit is goed wat ek vir myself moes ... jy weet ... Ek besef ek sou nie so iets van iemand anders aanvaar het. Dit sou nie vir my 'n oplossing gewees het om dit van iemand anders to hoor. Soos op 'n begrafnis jy weet, dit sou nie ... Omdat ek *self* daarby uitgekom het, het dit vir my ... ja, ja ... dit het ook nie onmiddelik gebeur. Vir *lank* het ek gevoel, ja ek is vies en dit is 'n baie 'stupid' ding om te laat gebeur. Dit was onnodig, kyk hoeveel lewens is opge-mors en mense wat daai ... maar dit was vir my 'n baie, baie groot verligting om te besef ek mag kwaad wees solank as wat ek dit dan *direk* sê, dat, 'Ek is kwaad, help my uitsort.' Ek dink dit was vir my 'okay' ... nou kan ek 'cope.' Dit was vir my nogal ... En die een wat vreeslik godsdiens praat ... dis vir my 'n 'fact' ... um...dis 'n gegewe, jy weet. En al hierdie vreeslike emosionele dinge oor godsdiens was vir my 'terrible.' Ek wil niks daarvan weet nie ... dis ... dis vir my baie erg en ... en jy bearbei nie 'n ander ou met godsdiens nie ... jy ... as jy hom nie kan beindruk met hoe jy jou lewe hanteer nie dan kan jy nie ... dan is jy nie 'n 'ambassador' nie soort van ... (lag). So, ek sê nou nie hierdie goed omdat ek 'n godsdiens-praterige mens is. Glad nie. Verder van weg. Maar ek onthou ek het ... um ... [Dit is] 'Job', hey? ... Joob ... is daar op 'n stadium dan ... dan ... as ou ... as ou ... Joob kla, kla, kla en sy pêle en almal gesit en gekerm het, dan maak ... die ... (dan maak) God die goed so bymekaar en sê Hy vir hom, 'Man, bly julle stil dat ek jou sê van al die goed wat ek gemaak het. Kan jy *dit* doen, kan jy *dit* doen, het jy al *dit* gedoen, het jy al *dit* gedoen ... eintlik is jy 'stupid', jy weet niks. Jy maak glad nie planne nie. Ek maak beter planne (lag).' En dit was vir my ... jy weet, dit was die ding wat my laat begryp het ... Dus ek aanvaar dat daar iemand is wat kan beplan, en ek is ... ek ... ek is absoluut 'amazed' oor ... um ... beplanning. Ek is *fanaties* oor beplanning (lag). So, as iemand so voorsorg kan tref vir dinge soos dat hierdie ding 'resulted' in 'n subtiele hele ketting van hoe dingetjies bymekaar steek ... as 'n ou dit kan uitdink, dan moet ek Hom met my lewe se beplanning kan vertrou, en dit is 'n ding wat toe met my 'ge-click' het. So die verwyd wat ek in daai opsig gehad het, het toe nou vir my ... Goed ... 'Ek weet beter. Ek hoef nie vir jou te verduidelik hoekom ek dit gedoen het, maar ek weet beter', en ek moet dit so aanvaar. So dit was vir my 'n ..."

Ond.: “Daar is 'n groter plan wat jy nie so mooi kan verstaan nie.”

Dia: “Ja. Mm ... En ek dink dit was nogal ... want op daardie stadium, een-en-twintig, um ... is ook 'n tyd wat jy jouself nie so mooi uitgesorteer het in daai opsig nie. Jy's emosioneel, miskien baie ... Jy weet hierdie skool godsdiens kan mos nogal vreeslik ‘overboard’ gaan ... dis ... dis ... amper 'n massa ... histerie. Ek ... ek wil dit nie afskiet, geensins nie. Dis vir baie van die kinders van baie waarde maar 'n mens moet kyk hoe lank hou dit, jy weet. Dis hoe ek voel oor die saak. En um ...”

Ond.: “So its almost like you went through a personal religious experience ...”

Dia: “Ja, ja. En dis my saak.”

Ond.: “It became more meaningful ...”

Dia: “Ja, ja. That's it. It was a test. Dit was baie maklik om enig by 'n CSV (Christelike Studente Vereniging) kamp te sê, ‘Ja, ek ... ek ... wonderlik...die Here is alles’, maar as jy *in* so 'n situasie kom dan is dit 'n ‘double take’ van *regtig* in so 'n situasie te ... met my het dit baie goed gegaan (by die CSV). Ons het nooit probleme gehad ...jy weet dit was niks wonderlik maar dit was altyd baie mooi georden en als het goed gegaan en so aan ... so dit was die eerste ... soos ek sê met die vriendin se suster en myne, omdat dit net ses maande uitmekaar uit was, was dit amper een ding ... in die ... in die ... in die opsig ...in daai opsig van, ‘Hoekom?’, jy weet; om dit te verwerk. Jy is nog half aan die werk daaraan dan kry jy die tweede een wat jy ook moet verwerk ... en ons was van laerskool af altyd baie, baie naby aan mekaar. En ook weer die gesinne het mekaar ook geken. Weet die ... die ouers ... die suster wat dood is was dan weer 'n vriendin van die oudste niggie van my ... my ma se suster se oudster dogter. So dit was als ... dink soos onder trouery maar dit was (lag) ... ek bedoel ... en ons het naby aan mekaar gebly almal. Dit was eintlik 'n gemeenskap wat onder mekaar betrokke was.”

Dia: “You've given me so much here Dia. I was just wondering what helped you?”

Dia: “Dit het my regtig gehelp dat ek my eie tyd gehad ... dat ek kon terugtrek. En dit was die grootste hulp ... en ...um ... nou die vriendin met dieselfde ondervinding. Ek dink daai twee ... Ek dink dit was regtig vir my 'n redding dat ek kon ... um ... dat ek nie geforseer is om ... om ... om dit *saam* te beleef saam met die gesin nie ... jy weet ... of saam te verwerk ... hoef nie saam te verwerk nie, dat ek dit op my eie kon verwerk en ... en ... miskien daai dat ek ... dat ek onmiddelik 'n groot ding moes afhandel (tesis) en daar waar ek die gemaklikste voel ...jy weet ... kon aangaan. Ek ...ek ... ek analiseer en bedink baie makliker as wat ek verwer(k) ... as wat ek emosioneel erken... verwerk. So ek dink ek het ... ek het ... jy weet, dit was die omstandighede wat uitgemaak het dat ... ja, ek kon myself besig hou. Ek het 'n doel gehad en julle moet my los want ek is ... besig ... so almal het my gelos. My kamerdeur was toe en hulle het my gelos want ek was nou besig om ... en ek dink in die proses van die tesis klaar maak het ek ...” (lang pouse/pause)

Ond.: “You threw yourself into the task. Kept yourself busy...”

Dia: “Maar ek het tog tyd vir myself gekry en die storm hier buite ... uh ... uh ... ek hoef nie alles daarvan te gesien het nie ... en ek was tevrede dat hulle genoeg ondersteuning het omdat hulle ... regtig mense naby aan ... aan mekaar ... aan hulle daar gehad het ... (Skielik ingedagte) Ek ... ek ... het net gewonder, as dit 'n jonger broer of suster is ... hoe mens dan dit sou hanteer het ... of as jy die oudste was en die middel een sou dood ... gewees ... en jy moet dalk bietjie help met die jonger een. Ek dink al daai goed gaan ... Jy weet, dan's die jonger een jou verantwoordelikheid. Dit sou vir my gal gewees het ... omdat my ouers het hulle vriende, jy weet, dat hulle naby mense gehad ... Dit is regtig duidelik dat die ouers geen energie regtig oor het ... ek ... kyk, ek se glad nie dat hulle nie belangstel in wat ek doen nie ... dis hoe *ek* dit ervaar het. Ek het hulle miskien *weggestoot*. Jy weet, dalk het hulle die boodskap hard en duidelik gekry, ‘Moenie met my sukkel nie.’ Ek weet nie. Ons het nooit regtig gepraat daaroor. Maar dit was definitief die ... die ... vir my die grootste hulp is dat ek tyd gehad het, dat ek nie, jy weet, ingesuijg was nie. Dit sou baie erg gewees het. En dit was vir my ... die feit dat my suster was wie sy was, was vir my baie maklik want dit het vir my regtig ... Baie keer

kon ek myself troos dat sy sou in elk geval swaar 'ge-cope' het met al die moeilike goed en sy het eintlik die beste deel van haar lewe gehad ... en sy was getroud, sy het daardie ervaring gehad, so, jy weet, van daaraf dink ek kom net die moeiliker goed. So dit was vir my lekker om te dink ... jy weet hoe voel jy as jy een-en-twintig is, trou is die 'ultimate.' Nooit weer sal daar enigiets in daai ... so wonderlik gebeur nie. En ... en ek het gedink, 'Wow!', jy weet. 'Sy is ... sy is nie ge-cheat' (lag). 'n Mens voel half ... hierdie heel jong mense [wat dood gaan], jy weet, hulle het nog regtig nie ervaring van ... Dit kan 'n lekker verbintennis wees ... Ag, ja, mens soek maar sulke goed."

Ond.: "With young people there is a sense that they have been robbed of a lot of important things."

Dia: "Ja. In die tye daarna het ek baie keer ... baie keer besef sy is dit nou soort van gespaar ..."

Ond: "She was spared, as you said, of going through what you went through."

Dia: "Ja. Dit sou seker ook sleg gewees het ... nie dat ek gedink het dit sou (lag) die grootste probleem gewees het. Um ... ja, seker."

Ond.: "You mentioned earlier that she was quite a dependent person."

Dia: "Um, 'I think it was sort of immediate dependency' in die situasie maar ek dink nie ... ek dink nie sy het my genoeg vertrou ... ek dink ek was vir haar bietjie onvoorspelbaar. Um, in die sin van ... (lag) ... jy weet, ons was so verskillend ... nie dat dit enigsins regtig dit was nie, maar ek dink ... ek het kans gesien vir goed waarvoor sy nie kans gesien het nie. So ek dink nie sy sou ... jy weet, sy...sy...sy sou haar lewe op my vertrou het. Ek was heelwaarskynlik *te onverantwoordelik* vir haar op daardie stadium en ek het goed gedoen wat vir haar seker *onaanvaarbaar* was. Jy weet, kanse gevat - in *haar* boek, kanse gevat. Wat nie ... Ek was nie ... maar sy was regtig baie ... um ... nie avontuurlustig nie (lag). Sy was nie baie waagsaam nie. Glad nie. Sy sou *NOOIT* na sy geswot het vir drie maande oorsee gegaan het sonder om presies te weet waar gaan sy heen, jy weet, na plekke, jy weet, na mense toe. Sy sal gaan kuier het seker maar sy sal nie gegaan het en kans gevat het want daai tyd het mense dit nog nie so gereeld gedoen en nou's dit niks snaaks nie. Maar daai tyd was dit nogal heeltemal ... jy weet, jy het maar gedoen het wat die Amerikaanse boeke gesê het jy moet doen. Daar was niemand om uit te vind regtig nie. Dit was..."

Ond.: "That is the way you remembered her but later ..."

Dia: "Ja, en dit is hoekom ek wonder as daar nog broers en susters was hoe sou mens daarmee ... jy weet ... of dit meer ondersteunend sou gewees het en of dit meer 'n vrag ('n las) ... (thoughtful, concerned) ... ek wil nie dat dit klink asof ek dit as 'n vreeslike verantwoordelikheid gesien het, maar dit is net 'n ding wat om jou gebeur en jy sien die mense om jou swaarkry, jy weet, en dit maak nie *jou* swaar eintlik soveel makliker."

Ond.: "These are the feelings that you are busy with and what I heard you say earlier on about your husband, is that when you had somebody of your own you could share this ..."

Dia: "Ja. Ja. Toe kon ek laat gaan."

Ond.: "That was the first time you acknowledged that ..."

Dia: "Ja. And ... and ... I had the emotional trust. Um ... And he is the type of guy who wouldn't be upset with it, jy weet. So hy ... dit het my, dink ek, die ... dis nie ... eerder ek dink, ek het geweet ek kon net soveel sê as wat ek wou. Hy sal nie ... (End of tape) aandring daarop dat ek meer vertel."

Interview translated into English:

Dia: “Just want to give [you] the background. Um...um...She was very...un...un...un-sure of herself. Right! [No] I don't think 'unsure' but I am struggling to find a word for it...[not unsure] but she asked for a lot of confirmation if she...if she...I think that the best...what I can remember the most about her voice was that she would say, for example, 'Not so?' and she had a little [pet] name for me, you know. So it was...she did seek confirmation - 'Not so?' Very well. On the other hand, perhaps I am overdoing [the description of] her (i.e exaggerating), I don't know. You know, that was the difference between the personalities. I was much more daring, she would not take chances. I was...I know I experienced some impatience, and on the other hand I knew that she was not as fragile as she...as I thought she was...if I think very quickly...I am expressing this very clumsily. I always suspected and I think almost intuitively knew, that she was stronger than what appeared on the surface. If she did not want to do something, she would not do it. Not stubborn, but she could...she could... she could...yes...And it took a lot, but she would do it...You had to push her up to that. So she had the privilege of being afraid, I did not because I am a loud mouth...I pretended that I was not scared. So if it was dark, I had to walk with her, you see, but it was my choice just as much as it was hers. So there is no resentment if I say this. Not at all. I almost want to laugh about it (laughs)...I realize we...we...had certain roles...we...”

Interviewer: “You had these roles...”

Dia: “Yes! And it was stupid, you know. I thought that I was proving something and she ... well, she enjoyed the safety that naturally was very important to her. So if we...We were small then...just to give you a picture of the differences between the two of us. In Matric (final year of High School) she started going out with this chap who was in Matric with her. We knew the family. You know, the families knew each other. Also the nieces, you know, the aunt - my mom's sister, all three families knew each other well...This chap (sister's boyfriend) and I clashed volubly many times because we were very similar (laughs). Um... and...and...he had many ideas which were totally ridiculous to me...so that you couldn't... things like, a girl should not wear something without sleeves. You must remember, that that was a time when we were not even allowed to...We had to wear slack suits, you know. That was the *worst* that you could do. So you have a picture of the time (laughs). So that was the type of thing that we would differ on but further than that we actually got on very well together. And then they were married. Then she...she had studied Music and then she did her higher diploma in teaching (HOD) and started teaching...it could also have been...No, she did complete her teachers' diploma first and then she started teaching. And I think they were married for only one-and-a-half years and then she died. He was still busy with his medical studies. He would have finished that year. He was...to tell the truth...It was a motor vehicle accident...and we were...she came down with us to the seaside house and we were there for about ten days and then he arrived; he did his practical in B and then he also came down. So he was also there for a while and then we drove back together, the two of them in their car and I travelled with my parents...and luckily he wanted to drive faster than we did (i.e. fortunate that they were ahead of parents and D) and we...we suspect that he fell asleep... you know. It is...I suspect, because I can remember times that she travelled with me, that it was not impossible that when he started to go off the road that she grabbed at the steering wheel because she was...she was inclined to do that, you know, she became so *panicky*. So I...I don't know...but I wouldn't be surprised. Anyway no one else was involved. She was killed instantly...And the other (i.e. husband)...A doctor arrived at the scene...and he (i.e. the husband) was actually in a terrible state. He had all sorts of injuries: a broken leg...and (unclear on recording)...ag! all sorts of things and they quickly took him to B. This happened just outside C so it's about an hour-and-a-half, I think from B. Um...and a car came from the front and stopped us and [the man] said that there had been an accident and the woman is...and they had...that's apparently what *he* told them to say, "Stop, stop the mother-in-law and them" or something (to that effect), you know. He could still...and then...so we had to go to K, I think...Yes, K was the closest mortuary where they took her; they took him on to B. So we first had to go to K...to...[identify]...the body, you know...But now, can you ...How terrible!

Can you think, for my parents? So from there...that took a long time...Strange, but I can remember a youngster, he was the son of a minister of religion, he was younger than I was. I think he had just started studying (at university), and *he* really...you know, he went to a lot of trouble to talk to me for a *long* time...you know...I don't know if his mother and father said to him, 'Shame. Talk to the young girl', you know, that sort of thing (laughs). I remember the discussion so...so well, you know. How dear he was without trying trying to be too consoling. To me he was such a dear. And then we went to B. and sat at Casualties for hours to find out what had happened to him (i.e. sister's husband). And then...then we...then my mother's sister who had a very good friend who was a pathologist, she got the doc(tor) to come quickly and his parents. So we stayed, I think, about a week in B. because at that stage it was touch and go with him, you know...he almost didn't make it...It was terrible. You know it was...it was...Oh! You know it was a Volkswagon...Ag, at that time there were no safety...you know, she actually had the safety belt on and she just...that was all that was wrong...just here she had a terrible blue bruise. I almost think it was her neck that...Then we ...When he was better then we went [home]. Then we had the funeral and that, that was terrible. But my experience of that was that I could cut out. There were people who took responsibility for my parents; people, you know, that coped with them and, mercifully, I could then withdraw...I cannot verbalize such things immediately. I have to lie on my bed. I need to sort out my thing and then I will...Only when I feel that I can cope, then I'll talk about it but not before. Before that you must please leave me alone (laughs). And I think that is what saved me. I had time to be alone. You know, this I remember, that I phoned this friend of mine a few times...from the hotel...that's right...ja...whew!...that was long ago, good heavens! Anyway...then...he (i.e. the husband) was still very bad, but then I had to finish my thesis. So I had something that I needed to get to work on immediately which also, in a way, made it easier. Um...She was buried...I felt bad that she was buried before her husband could be there. Yes. It was almost as if he had difficulty with...with closure...you know. It was bad for him. Um...and then...

Interviewer: "And for you?"

Dia: "My...my, I think my parents, for me, were the greatest...[concern]. I had a friend at that stage but not that I would trust him so much...It takes longish for me to trust a guy (fellow) to talk to him about things that I have not yet sorted out. This sort of talking (i.e. the interview) is not a problem for me, not at all, but if I haven't yet sorted it out...emotional... emotional trust I find difficult. So with him I didn't really...and my friends were there... they were very...and some of my female friends...and her sister who studied with my sister...so they also knew her well, which made it more involved...from their side."

Interviewer: "So they were there for you."

Dia: "Absolutely! But as much as you can support someone else when you also have to hand in your thesis, you know, and you are busy arranging your wedding, and so on, because they were all, you know, in line...and, you know, it was not as if I experienced it that they were not there, never, but they had other priorities, absolutely. After that, for me...for a very long time, it was terrible the way my parents handled it. Because she was so small and delicate and lovable...Really a lovable person...it almost went to the point of idolatry, you know. So much so that at one point I said, 'You are remembering incorrectly'. You know, they...they ...they sort of...not that I felt that I was not getting enough attention, no, never, never. It was never that. It just factually irritated me...the twisting of facts because that person was no longer there...that was for me..."

Interviewer: "They remembered only the nice things."

Dia: "Yes, yes. You know...it's too silly...For me it was...and then those terrible regular visits to the cemetery...I very quickly said, 'No thank you! I...I will remember her in my head. I am not going to a stone'. You know that sort of attitude (laughs). Terrible! It was very difficult to cope with...and they also handled it very differently, the two of them, which for me was also very...noticeable and which...I think, did some damage to their relationship. Not that there were ever drastic problems, you know, just the usual differences over things, but they definitely um...My father wanted to speak about

it continuously. He was a very emotional, sentimental, expressive person and...and...and yes, and expressed his emotions much more, and my mother wanted to keep it very private and I think it was very difficult for them. I realized that I would have to...that I would rather handle it like my mother did than like my father [did]. It is almost as if he wanted to 'expose' it and we were not ready for the 'exposure' but his way of 'coping' was to expose it, you know. So there was a conflict which was a little difficult. It was actually...yes, and...it is...I mean it is both their need(s) and they had an equal right to deal with it in their own way but then there was no support for each other. So it was actually...that was the most difficult of the whole..."

Interviewer: "How was it for you?"

Dia: "At one stage I was irritated with my father. Because he threatened me in a way, in the sense that he...he...he wanted to drag things out of me that I did not want to speak (about)...you know...he wanted to talk about it and I didn't want to then. I'm not saying that he as a person was threatening, but he created situations that were a threat to me. And I wanted to get away. And the more I wanted to...you know we both felt...Oh shame! (laughs)...It was terrible. Shame! It was terribly bad for them. After that I went to J...the next year I went to J. to work. Oh!...and that *first* Christmas, and the *first* birthday, good heavens what a drama! And *to this day*, even *now*, if you forget her birthday, and if you forget the day that she died, then things are uncomfortable. I have never forgotten but I know I must make an effort. A person will certainly do it. I will do it...I remember it, but I think one should not actually *celebrate* it. I would like a quiet time by myself..."

Interviewer: "Um. But not..." (interrupted)

Dia: "Yes. Very often, I have often wondered, if it were my child, how I would handle it. The other factors...from my side...the phases that I passed through. I remember...it was...it was when I was married...Oh wait, let me first tell you...it was...this was a thing that was very difficult...to... almost to, not really to get permission, but *emotionally* to give *myself* permission to move away from home. *That* was very bad. Because I was the only one that was left and I...um... half realized that their support for each other was not so good and I was for them...a sort of catalyst between them...for me it was...I remember it was *terrible* to have to go and tell them that I wanted to move into a flat. For me it was...ah!...it was worse than going into an examination...(laughs)...you know. It was grim...it was really grim...And I wondered how they would react. They did in fact blame each other...I remember...even that evening when I told them they actually...only lightly, it was not a terrible scene, but they made these half comments which said, 'but it's...', you know. They definitely did not understand why I wanted to stay on my own because at that time you must know it was also not an okay thing to do. You see my sister did not do this. She stayed at home until she got married. So it was a foreign concept for them I think."

Interviewer: "And their reaction?"

Dia: "I cannot remember the comments but I think they felt...that...that there was...You know, now that I think about it, maybe it was what worried each one about the other one's behaviour that they accepted had made me want to leave home. You know...I...they did not say [this] in so many words... really discuss this in so many words. I can just remember that there were comments such as, 'Yes, but if...', you know,...'You also make it difficult', or something like that, you know...and I think that they perhaps...probably [they] assumed that I experienced the other's behaviour with as much difficulty as they experienced it, you know, my mother and my father. I assume that my father would have thought, that is as I understand it now, that what my mother...maybe...the way in which my mother handled the situation and her subsequent behaviour, perhaps made it difficult...for *me*, while in fact it was difficult for *him*. I don't think that he understood what was difficult for me. They definitely did not understand why I wanted to leave home and it was *terribly, terribly* traumatic for me to say this...to get myself so far as to say, 'Now I am going!' "

Interviewer: "Why was it so traumatic for you?"

Dia: “Um...because I found it difficult to explain it to them...um...because they literally *smothered* me, you know, I did not have a chance to breathe because *then* I was the only focus. One day my brother-in-law said to me, ‘You will never get a husband if you stay’ (laughs). That’s *not* why I left but (laughs) he also...In other words, what I think now is that he probably also experienced it...that they are so...You know, they were not aware of this. Certainly not, because they are the most dear, most supportive people you can get. But they did not have as much *insight* as one would hope for.”

Interviewer: “They did not have insight into your pain. It was very difficult for them and they could not understand what was important to you.”

Dia: “Yes. I think they could not get over it. No, no. I think that their needs were obviously considerably greater than their insight in...into *my* situation. I am sure of that. That made it...I must say...I had to try and shake it off forcibly. Um...Still today there are unwritten rules that we will, more often than not, be together at Christmas. To tell the truth, I have only spent two Christmases away from my parents...you know...and that is not...My father is now deceased but (sighs)...it...it is the same feeling of...you, you do not have... you cannot explain why...there’s no explanation as to why you are not available, why you would like to do your own thing, that would soften it for them. So this is...But after my marriage, for the first six months I was able to really cry about it for the first time and I could say to my husband it was *terrible* for me. You know...I...I...at that...I...I could...you know we...he’s not one for speaking much but I could really verbalize it...it was...you know perhaps ...one, two or three episodes where for five minutes I could say, ‘that and that was terrible for me’. That was that! And that was enough for me. For me at that stage...Then it was all right. Afterwards it was all right. But I retained a *tre-men-dous* anxiety about travelling by car to the sea...this year for the first time I realized...you know, it’s all right. I...I...you know afterwards it got so bad that I thought, ‘Okay now we’re at K., we’ve made it...now we’re at B, we’ve made it’, you know. That’s how I travelled to the sea. It was...it was very bad. And I... these days I laugh at myself because I still think that you are just going to...[have] a problem ...an accident, when you’re on the main road. I immediately put my seat belt on whereas here I would forget. So I...it clicked...now there are certain little episodes...we kept absolute contact with her husband and with...with...he remarried...until a [certain] stage and...then ... ag, the differences that he and I had never had anything to do with my...my sister’s death. I remember that we got into the car after the fellow told us and we rode a few kilometers, when my mother said to my father, ‘you will never blame that fellow’. And that was...that was her attitude throughout. My...my...my father was really the more emotional one that could have [reproached him]... you know, ‘You did not look after her well enough’, that sort of thing. My mother is the more logical one who...you know realized but, you know, to him she is just as important and he would...at all costs he would...you know for him it was *worse* than for anyone else.”

Interviewer: “And for you, how did you feel?”

Dia: “No. Never. Never. Definitely never [blamed him]. If there is anything that I myself know is that she was the one that plucked at the steering wheel. Because I never felt that he drove too fast, or that he drove too slowly, but if he could have done anything better he would, you know. He was *mad* about her. Definitely never, never, never that! Thereafter, I often wondered how much he would have dominated her...he can be emotionally hard and that’s what I often wondered about and often thought, perhaps it’s all for the good. You know, there were certain incidents with the...the other woman when I thought, ‘whew!’ If that were my sister, in all likelihood, I would not keep quiet. Um...so I...one feels differently in different situations, you know. I mean it’s bad at a stage and then something happens then you think, you know, perhaps...um... ‘It was better’, you know. You view it that way. So the...they had no children so it was not...um...and with the...with my marriage I must say that I began to miss her, but you know how it is at a wedding...It is so...more with the arrangements than with the...but we never ... we were still too far apart at that age, that four - five years and we were too different, that, she really was a pal to me. I realize that it would have come later. Um... frequently I wondered what the situation would have been once I had children for example. I wondered how we

would...um...how would the relationship have changed and...when my parents began to get older I often wondered how...you know, how she would have seen it. Um...actually it could have been easier or more difficult, you know, there are always differences in the way you handle situations so there would definitely have been *great* differences. Also because the...her husband is a very difficult chap. My husband is a very calm person. He will...he's actually not difficult. Not because *I* say so but that's the way people experience him. He's a very peaceful chap. He goes along with things and if he doesn't want to do something, he won't do it and he won't make a big fuss about it. So he gets away with things (laughs), in the sense of not doing things that are unacceptable to him. Um... um... the... situations that I'm thinking about...that I thought about the other night (after we had spoken on the phone)...what was interesting was when I realized it. Yes. At one stage I...realized that my friends with sisters I sort of...you know, it's very nice - [to have] support - and then I thought of *my* sister and realized that it wouldn't have been like that because we were too different. Um ... we would, *yes*, be there for each other but we had no...there would be little of doing things together. We simply did not do things in the same way. *But*, you know, as one grows older... I don't know. So I wondered about that and when my father died...in the hospital, and so on. Then I realized that it probably would have been easier. Last Monday I had an idea that I think that my sister would have supported her (i.e. mother) far better because they were much *closer* to each other in a way, but still I don't know if *she* (mother) would have experienced it like that ...I don't know. Must ask her! (laughs). Funny, we don't speak about such things (laughs). Isn't it strange how you...I don't know when I see how my...how *my* daughter...oh yes. That is something else that I *now* realize that the anxiety that I had gradually built up of, *whew!* you know, at some stage I will be alone. You know a husband is not really *family*. In the end, he has a choice, you know. He has to be there or he doesn't have to, and your sister *must* be there, you know...and your child..."

Interviewer: "She will always be your sister!"

Dia: (laughs) "Yes, yes. If she feels like going or not, she will still...(laughs)...but my daughter, I think, grew into that role...of...you know, we are very, very close. We have the same sense of humour. We share a lot...we are also very different...She is a performer, I would rather, please, stand behind the curtain (laughs) but she understands very well...so that...and sometimes she does things and I really thought hard when she...when she said that she wanted to study music, whether I tried, you know, [to influence her]...That was not the case at all. I told her that I refuse. She could not take music...when she was at school. Um... because we had a session, you know, when she was little and she didn't want to practise and when she got to Standard six then she wanted to again. Then I said, 'No, I'm sorry. You've had your chance, now it's over!'. But then after a while...meantime I hoped that she would want to because she is so musical...I can see that the child herself...knows it's...it's ...and then really she came back again and said, No, really...She really wants to. Then I said, 'Okay, if your marks remain the same and *I* don't have to say to you go and practise.' And after that I never had to tell her to go and practise. So I managed to sort that out, that I did not try to [push her] into a direction ...um...I actually discouraged her. Said to her, 'you must think very carefully. One should not make your hobby your career', because she's not terribly interested in teaching. But then again...you know, even the music...my sister and I...she used to sight read. Always did what the book said. I looked at the book and then I...yes, okay, I think it sounds like that and then I did my thing, you know, and clearly did not get as far [as she did]...so her...way is...[more effective]...yes (laughs)...She was very willing to...I think the...the...your...your...the personality differences, I think, the position in the family, I would say, is very important. And then I think the age when it happens...you know, when both are still in the home, then it's a day-to-day...and it was almost...how we felt because we had a holiday with them."

Interviewer: "For that while she was with you."

Dia: "Ja, ja. So that in itself, just the return home was again a bit of a separation because they were married for such a short time and...um...there was something else that I thought of...I think there's...there are apparently bonds between siblings, you know, if there is more than one in the home then I think it is..."

Interviewer: “Did you have that bond? Was it different when you were...”

Dia: “Um...you know, because...because we always did things together with the cousins, also with the sister's children, they were the big ones and we were the little ones so it means that...I had a cousin who was just as old as I was and a younger cousin. Those are the two who are dead. And the older sister and the one who was exactly the same age as my sister, they were always together. So we were the little ones. So we...the play always...when they visited I played with the boys and she with her...so even there, you know, there...I think we...”

(Interruption -- Dia commented that the tape was nearly finished)

Dia: "Um...There was something else that I realised...[I forget] it will come to me now, now..."
(long pause).

Interviewer: “To go back, you and your sister did not play with each other as such. So she was not the elder sister in the sense of making decisions...?”

Dia: “No. She was the elder sister with a sense of responsibility. Um...it was a responsibility because she was so afraid of making a mistake. Which of course left me more free ... then I made a mistake, you know! So...I mean, you know...if we ever had conflict it was about *that* ...because she tried to stop me because I...um... provoked her. Because...well it was fascinating when she became *panicky* because I wanted to do something that...look I'm talking on a small scale...we were extremely civilized little girls, you know. We never...(laughs)...so what I am saying is very subtle...I only want to explain what the situation was (like). My...my grandmother would say, for example: 'She was not made for this world', and that was what it was about. She was very different. She ... she...I think as a little one...(distracted by recorder)...What was I saying?”

Interviewer: “She was not of this world?”

Dia: “When she was very little she had asthma now and then. So I think she was very protected. Not that I experienced it that way. I was on my own mission, I think...I was too small and stupid...Um...”

Interviewer: “So you say the differences between you and...” (attempt to summarise interrupted by Dia)

Dia: “Yes and if you had (asked) me these same (questions)...[if I were in] the same situation five years after her death I would have probably [mentioned] totally different things...I don't know...probably [would have responded] very differently...because...the...the...No...Perhaps because I...I was always afraid how it would be if we...it really is a thing that a person really wonders what she would be like now. Because you remember her with her young ... everything, you know, and if I have to think of how my personality has changed...maybe not totally...(laughs) but...very, very. Much more patient, much less...you know. I can imagine that she probably [would have] much more self confidence...you know...much more assertive even, would have been more easily assertive because for me it was...interestingly enough I remember that I could *never* see her as a school teacher who could cope with a whole class full of children. Because *I* say school children are, for me, very threatening to have to cope with. You know students are a different matter but school children always remain, for me...and I can remember that I wondered, how on earth! And she carried on. Okay. Good. They were smaller classes because it was music but, on the other hand, it was class music and not everyone enjoyed it. So it is a...and I...I can't remember that she ever complained that it was unmanageable for her. That is why I, you know, had the feeling that if she wanted to cope she would. She was definitely much stronger and I know that...that I never underestimate little people and I think I base that on her and then later on X [friend]... and my mother. My mother is very small. Small, small, ...'a little breath' and I know that you must not underestimate little people (laughs): 'Physically

timid doesn't mean anything!' (laughs)...(Still laughing) Now that I think about it, she has grown in my mind (consciousness)."

Interviewer: "That's interesting . It's amazing how much we learn from our siblings."

Dia: "Isn't it! Oh, but I think you also make assumptions. And quietish people...you should also not underestimate. It is also...I think basically that was based on my knowledge of her strength...I think. But now, there is really tremendous support in the family and circle of friends for my parents and for me. I think it is also a very...very important thing."

Interviewer: "You said that from the beginning somebody spoke to you."

Dia: "Yes, this friend of my mother's...she's been dead just on a year and I have an extremely special feeling [for her]...you know we got on very well...Actually what happened is that her parents... I...um...my father's mother was still alive, that is grandmother X and that was the only grandmother or grandfather that we knew, but *this* friend's parents at one stage decided...the friend and the two sisters, our three families were always together. But she was never married and she had these two parents. And they...were sort of for all of us, our grandmother and grandfather but of the whole lot they, for some or other reason, apparently decided that I was their grandchild. So it was...everyone accepted this, there was never any problem that I noticed. So she...to a certain extent, we shared her parents, you know, something the other...that the other cousins did not do. And she was the type of personality that...if there was a crisis then she was there. She never really...I think, yes, you know, I think she was really a *mother* to me...an *idol* in a way...because she never spoke about things, but she *acted*...she was *there*, you know...she was always...that's what she taught me about friendship that you cannot...that you will not easily...or you don't find this in many people...that *unconditional* friendship. So she would immediately drop everything and say to her sister, "I'm going. You and your husband travel together". And obviously they came along to B. and they were with us that...that week...those few days, I don't think it was a whole week. And it was like...you know they left immediately which was wonderful. And this happened *repeatedly* you know. So that support was there and it was very valuable. So from my side it took the burden from me because I felt, you know, now, in a way, I must carry these people (i.e. parents). They did not have the energy really to...and because of the nature of my personality they...I did not ask much...I actually asked them to leave me alone. You know because they can carry on and cope with their problem and I coped with mine..."

Interviewer: "You wanted to cope in your own way."

Dia: "Oh, absolutely!"

Interviewer: "So they did not have much to do with you ... the support?"

Dia: "Very little really. Okay, no...we did make the arrangements together and that sort of thing but they never, *never* asked how one felt about it. *Mercifully* not...It would have been very bad. But on the other hand, my mother was not a great talker and my father was not ... um...was not at all analytical in the sense of, 'Come let's think how we feel about this matter.' You just feel, you know. You don't wonder why you feel."

Interviewer: "You just feel."

Dia: "Yes, oh yes. He was a lovable person...the day when he died I realized...that the one person who *un-con-di-tio-nally* always...you know it is the stupidist thing...would always take my side and look for excuses for me, is no longer there (laughs). My mother would...um ... 'first sort everything out. First...first find out whose fault it was'...[she would] always think *I* was at fault, 'Because I know my children well!' (laughs). But she is absolutely for...she was ...you know, 'Sort the thing out!' She could...you get the picture of how difficult it was for those two and I felt that I stood in the middle. And I think if there had been other children, perhaps it would have been different...handled differently...(thoughtful).I...when...my cousins died (after they were married) and the way in which

her sister handled it, my mother's sister handled it, and the way in which she (i.e. mother) handled it was totally different. Although, not so much the two sisters as the two families. But then the children were *older*, you know. I think that makes a *big* difference.”

Interviewer: “How much older were your cousins?”

Dia: “Well, you know, she was...she (i.e. sister) was just out of the house when she died and the cousins died...the older one...we were about forty two, forty three or thereabout and the younger fellow...he was about five years younger than us and he was in his late thirties, but they both had families with children and had been out of the house for quite a long time ...although no, I lie. The younger cousin was not out of the house. My mother's sister still stayed with them in the house. They had a flatlet...her husband was dead at that stage...so they...yes, actually they were together daily. But it was striking to me how the personality of the person...all the people in the family...their personalities, especially the parents, in the family, their way of handling it largely determines how *you* will experience it and the...and the...Okay, how you cope with it is certainly your affair, but...but the demands that are made on you, apart from the fact that your brother or sister is dead...the immediate demands... that is determined by the personalities of the other people in the family...And this can be even more taxing than the fact that you have suffered a loss, you know. That was something that I realized afterwards...*That* was for me the thing that stood out. I think...I think that nobody can say that my parents were, you know, outrageously this or that. It was just that I had to cope with...I must cope in the way that they cope...and that was a *double* thing for me. You know like...imagine that your son has a...loses a girl friend. You cope with it the way that *he's* coping with it...even if she was a lovely person that you knew. It was...yes, you know, this happened over and over and over again...”

Interviewer: “That you felt the pain of your parents and the way they felt affected you - your whole mood?”

Dia: “Oh, absolutely. Yes, yes. And it places *demands* on you...and I assume that if there are more children then the children could half *understand* each other, you know, and almost jointly bear the (burden)...that thing of, ‘Let us help mom and dad cope.’ And my mother and father, I think, are not...they are not extremely...we are a very civilized family (laughs)... so, you know, if I speak of them...it is...it is very subtle (laughs)...but it did...It did place demands on *me*.”

Interviewer: “That is the way you experienced it although demands were not directly made on you”

Dia: “No, no. Not at all. No.”

Interviewer: “It was your feeling.”

Dia: “Yes... And I finished (studies)...It (i.e. the death) was in July in my fourth year... and I finished in December. I got work in J but I commuted. So I still lived at home and that October...*That* was the first thing. The very same friend of whom I spoke earlier on and I decided to go overseas. Then the rand was very strong...we were speaking about that the other day. It was seventy cents to the dollar. No, the *dollar* was seventy cents to the rand. So it was...it was something that we very much wanted to do and she was already there. Just to get away for those three months was...there were no fixed addresses and it was certainly very bad for them (i.e. parents) but for me it was...I just wanted to get away a little from the clinging because the holding on became more intense. And then I came back...in December I think, and moved into a flat. I often wondered if I was not the only child, I am sure that the situation would have been easier. I often wondered how...how it would have been if she had been there and, as I say (there would have been) many positives and many negatives. I realise that there may have been a lot of conflict because there would be two families which may...you know, our family which...my husband and I and the children would have had to cope with her and her husband...the brother-in-law...It is interesting when things started going terribly wrong between him

and his second wife - she had a small problem with drugs and things, you know. No, not 'drugs' ... 'depression drugs?' ... What do you call them?"

Interviewer: "Anti-depressants, medication?"

Dia: "Medication, yes, that's it! And then they were divorced and he's remarried now. And now...here towards the end of last year, the one cousin who is just as old as my sister was, her husband...they were all together in matric...I am talking about my brother-in-law and my sister and the cousin and her husband...it was a group that I knew very well...that everyone... you know, it was a well known group...to each other...then her husband died and it was... how can I say...almost like a reunion. You know, then all the friends were back. And then it struck me *again* how much this third wife...looked like my sister - small and dark and fine - and...you know...it was strange."

Interviewer: "*Again?* Was the second wife also like her?"

Dia: "No. Not at all. She was beautifully tall...but very young...I think that he thought he could perhaps mould her. It was interesting to me just after the...after the accident, I often went...I had to...I went to him between classes and helped him with exercises and so on, but I knew that for him (the visits) revolved around *speaking*, you know. It was awful for him. He was bedridden for a long time. He had a fracture that gave many problems. Um...so it was also a ... it was also someone ... because he and I were actually friends, I had to almost support him as well. You know, this was also...also another...another situation."

Interviewer: "You seem to have taken on a lot of the responsibility."

Dia: "That's the way *I* experienced it, you know and, I think, because of the nature of my personality. I cannot cope...I cannot make as if I...or I cannot *give in*..."*admit*" that's the word. I cannot, not...I cannot, not cope because as soon as I do this, then I collapse completely... you know. For a while I must...my...my...my *mind* must take over rather than my emotions. I mean...I must *think* myself through this...yes, I think, come through this cognitively. Um...and I think this was part of the process too...it was bad. I could not cope with it immediately. I would, in any event, not have been able to talk about it with anybody at that stage. And I think *there* it would also differ a lot...because the need which...you know, the...the personality will determine what your needs are. What was bad about the first experiences of someone close to you who has died, I think the...the grandfather...the friend's father whom I called grandfather...his (death) was at that stage the only one in my family that I had ever experienced and then the friend's sister. She also died in a motor accident...and I think the suddenness of it...That's the other thing that I have thought about...um...the manner in which they die...is...um...will also certainly make a difference. You know, if a person is sick for a long time, then it is something completely different...to this unexpected... especially when it is accompanied by violence, it can be even more awful, you know. You know that I always said that I...I...I...and I definitely felt it...I honestly felt : 'Why not...Why her and not me?' I mean I was not in a relationship. I was not married. I was almost disposable at that stage because it wouldn't have been so bad for everybody...um...naturally I'm not so stupid...(laughs)...it would have been bad (laughs)...obviously...so what I mean is that they would have felt bad for a time, you know...nobody would have...They became much more realistic later on. I remember that I once said to them: 'No wait a bit. Now you are going overboard.' But I really felt...if I ever felt in the least bit guilty, I felt guilty because it was not me, because she had just got married, just qualified. I wasn't sure what I wanted to study...nobody...or what work I wanted to do...if I wanted to do that sort of work. I was not in a relationship that was going anywhere so, you know, it would simply have been logical. I think she...she was perhaps...so that was the only thing that I thought of, you know."

Interviewer: "The only feeling of guilt was the fact that you survived..."

Dia: "Yes. I wouldn't say that I really felt guilty...how shall I describe it...but I know that I had such thoughts...which...you know if I had to make the plans, I would have made them like this, you know" (laughs).

Interviewer: “If you could!”

Dia: “Yes (laughs). And that was another thing...religion...Fortunately at one point I got as far as to realize that I *was* allowed to be angry. I *could* but then I should not gossip about God, I must tell Him that. That was a great relief. That experience that, okay, you may be angry but then you do not turn away and speak behind [God's back]...the...the...the...[one] who ...who...who has the power, has done the wrong thing and therefore I hate Him, and things like that. You know. Fortunately I realized that you could...and those are things that I had to [work out] for myself ... you know ... I realize I would not have accepted anything like that from anyone else. It would not have been a solution for me to hear this from someone else. Like at the funeral, you know, it would not...but because I came to this *myself*, it was...yes ...yes...it also did not happen immediately. For a long time I felt, yes, I'm annoyed and it's a very stupid thing to let happen. It was unnecessary. Look at how many lives have been messed up and people who...but for me it was a very, very big relief to realize that I may be angry as long as I could say this *directly*. That, ‘I am angry, help me sort it out.’ I think it was okay for me...now I can cope. It was for me...and those who talk a great deal of religion ... for me it is a fact...um...it is a given, you know, and all these terribly emotional things about religion are terrible for me. I don't want to know anything about it. For me it was very bad ... and you don't belabour someone else with religion... You...if you cannot influence the person with how you handle your life...then you are not a good ambassador sort of (laughs). So I'm not saying these things because I am a religious-speaking person. Not at all. Anything but. But ...I remember that I...um, [it is] Job hey? [Yes] Job...there's a stage when...when...old...old...Job complains, complains, complains and he and his pals sit and moan, then...then...God puts things together and He says to him, 'Man you keep quiet and let me tell you about all the things that I've done. Can you do *this*? can you do *this*? Have you done *this*? have you ever done *this*? Actually you're stupid. You don't know anything. You don't make any plans. I make better plans' (laughs). And for me...you know, that was what made me understand...so I accept that there is someone who can plan and I am...I...I'm absolutely amazed by...um... planning. I am fanatical about planning (laughs). So if someone can make provision for things so that this whole thing resulted in a whole subtle chain of how things are connected...if someone can conceptualize this, then I must trust Him with the planning of my life. This is something that clicked with me. So the accusation that I had in that respect has become for me...good...I know better. I don't have to explain to you why I did this, but I know better', and I must accept it like that. So for me it was a ... ”

Interviewer: “There is a greater plan that you cannot quite understand?”

Dia: “Yes. Mm. And I think it was...at that stage, twenty one, um...is also a time that you have not sorted yourself out properly in that respect. You are emotional, perhaps very...you know, this school religion can actually go terribly overboard...it's...it's...almost a mass...hysteria. And I don't want to shoot it down, not at all. For many children it is of great value but one must see how long it lasts, you know, that's how I feel about the matter. And um...”

Interviewer: “So it's almost like you went through a personal religious experience...”

Dia: “Yes, yes. And that's my business.”

Interviewer: “It became more meaningful...”

Dia: “Yes, yes, that's it. It was a test. It was very easy at a Christian Student Society camp to say, 'Yes, I...I...wonderful...the Lord is everything', but when you find yourself *in* such a situation then it is a double take...of *really* being in such a situation to...With me it went very well (with the Christian Student Society). We never had problems...you know it was not really wonderful but it was always very well organized and everything went well and so on...so that was the first...as I say with the friend's sister and my (sister's death) because their deaths were only six months apart it was almost one thing...in this...in this...in this respect...in that respect of, 'Why?', you know...and to deal with it. You are half involved in working through it when the second one occurs and you have to deal with

that as well. And from primary school days we were very, very close and also the families knew each other. You must realize that the parents...the sister that died was a friend of my eldest cousin...my mother's sister's eldest daughter. So it was all...like intermarriage (interrelated) but it was (laughs)...I mean...and we stayed close to each other, all of us. It was actually a community that were involved with each other."

Interviewer: "You've given me so much here, Dia. I was just wondering what helped you?"

Dia: "It really helped that I had my own time...that I could withdraw and that was the greatest help...and...um, this friend who had the same experience. I think those two...I think it was really my salvation that I could...um...that I was not forced to...to...experience this *together* with the family...you know...or to work through it together...did not have to work through it together, that I could do it by myself...and...and maybe that I...that I immediately had to deal with a major task (thesis) and could continue with something that I felt the most comfortable, you know...I...I...I... analyze and reflect much more easily than I am able to work through...than what I can emotionally acknowledge and work through. So I think I... you know, those were the circumstances that resulted in...yes, I could keep myself busy. I had an objective and you must leave me alone because I am...busy...so everyone left me alone. The door of my room was closed and they left me alone because I was busy...and I think in the process of finishing the thesis I..." (long pause)

Interviewer: "You threw yourself into the task. Kept yourself busy."

Dia: "But I still found time for myself and the storm outside...uh...uh...I didn't have to see it all...and I was satisfied that they had enough support because they had...people close to... to each other...and to them...they had their...(suddenly very thoughtful) I...I...just wondered, if it were a younger brother or sister how one would then have handled it...or if you were the eldest and the middle one should die...and perhaps you had to help with the younger one. I think all those things...you know, then the younger one would be your responsibility. That would have been gall to me...because my parents had their friends, you know, they had people close to them...it is really clear that the parents have no energy left over...I...look, I don't say that they were not interested in what I was doing...that's how *I* experienced it. Perhaps *I pushed them away*. You know, perhaps they got the message loud and clear: 'don't bother me', I don't know. We never really spoke about it. But there was definitely the...the...for me the *greatest* help was that I had time, that I was not, you know, sucked in. That would have been really terrible. And you know for me...the fact that my sister was who she was, that for me was very easy because it really...Very often I could console myself that she would, in any case, have struggled to cope with all the difficult things [of life] and actually that she had lived the best part of her life...and she was married, she had that experience. So, you know, from then on, I think, only the more difficult things come. It was nice to think...You know how you feel when you are twenty-one, marriage is the ultimate - never again will anything...so wonderful ever happen again. And...I thought, 'Wow', you know. She was...'she was not cheated!' (laughs). A person almost feels these very young people, you know, they really have not yet had the experience of ... it can be a wonderful union...Oh yes, one seeks such things."

Interviewer: "With young people there is a sense that they've been robbed of a lot of important things."

Dia: "Yes. Thereafter I often...very often...very often realized that she was sort of spared ..."

Interviewer: "She was spared, as you said, of going through what you went through."

Dia: "Yes. It would surely also have been bad...not that I thought that it would (laughs) have been the biggest problem. Um...yes, definitely."

Interviewer: "You mentioned earlier that she was quite a dependent person."

Dia: “Mm...I think it was sort of immediate dependency in the situation but I don’t think... she trusted me enough...I think I was a bit unpredictable...um, in the sense of...(laughs)... you know we were so different...not that it was really that, but I think...I was prepared to tackle things that she was not...So I don’t think she would have...you know, she...she...she would have entrusted her life to me. I was in all likelihood *too irresponsible* for her at that stage and I did things that were probably unacceptable to her. You know, took chances - in *her book*, took chances. Which did not...I was not a...but she was really...um...not adventurous (laughs). She was not very daring. Not at all. She would *never* go overseas for three months, after she had studied, without knowing exactly where she was going, you know, to places, you know, to people. She would have gone to visit, sure, but she wouldn’t have gone and taken a chance because at that time people did not do it so often and nowadays there’s nothing strange about it. But at that time it was really altogether...you know, you did what the American books said you had to do, there was no one really to find out. It was...”

Interviewer: “That was the way you remember her and later ...”

Dia: “Yes and that is why I wonder if there had been more brothers and sisters how one would have...you know...if it would have been more supportive or more of a burden... (thoughtful, concerned) ... I don’t want it to sound as if I considered it to be a tremendous responsibility but it is just a thing that happens around you and you see people around you struggling, you know, and this does not make your task actually so much easier.”

Interviewer: “These are the feelings that you are busy with and what I heard you say earlier on about your husband, is that when you had somebody of your own, you could share this...?”

Dia: “Yes. Yes. Then I could let go.”

Interviewer: “That was the first time that you acknowledged that...”

Dia: “Yes. And...and...I had the emotional trust. Um...and he is the type of guy who wouldn’t be upset with it, you know...so he...it made me think that I...it’s not...rather, I think, I knew I could say as much as I wanted to (say). He would not insist...[that I tell more].”

Interviewer thanked Dia for her contribution and asked if she was prepared to sign the Consent Form. She readily agreed and the form was signed. Dia expressed surprise at how much she had had to say about the loss of her sister. We greeted each other and she went home to her family.

Research Participant 3: Elena

Background information:

Elena (25yrs) is the youngest of three children. Her second brother, Tom, was killed two-and-a-half years ago at the age of twenty-five in a motorcycle accident. Elena was 22 years old at the time of the accident. She has one elder brother who is married. Elena is unmarried and living at home.

Initially Elena was hesitant about participating in the study. She was given time to consider this and after a week when I contacted her again she said that she was willing to share her experience with me. As she has a very full work schedule, arrangements were made to meet at her home for the interview.

Original Interview:

Elena: “Um...in October it will be about...it will be three years...It's about two-and-a- half years now. Um...I think him being...well, very...of course not just...well obviously a brother...he was very involved in the businesses. I think on that side of things it's taken a big knock...because of that emotional side. Because the last shop we opened was his and...um...the shop in B was basically for him. So like *me* working in *that*, I did in a way for *him*...It's a strange thing almost, ja (yes), but ja, I did it for him and obviously...What I felt when it happened was...well look, because it was obviously a great shock to us all...and um...I felt I needed to help the family through it...like support the family. Um...my mother...I think it [he] was her soft spot (half-hearted laugh), he was a soft spot so I think she...she took it very hard. I think as any mother would...um...He was twenty five, ja, so it was very young and...a lot of energy. He was...um... he was...if he wasn't here at home, he was always talked of, you know. We'd like sit down if he wasn't here and we'd discuss Tom, you know. It was always about him and what he did...and... He was...um...like I said, a lot of energy, so when he was gone, it...it...it changed our lives totally. I think up to today, it's...ja, it's not nice...at all...obviously...”

Interviewer: “He left a gap. You feel it...”

Elena: “A lot...Obviously Christmas and things like that are like...terrible...they're dreaded...Um ...ja, I think, the last one we tried to go away from...you know, like from the home because we always used to be here and stuff, but...um...also it doesn't work. Ja, it's...a *hole* - in our hearts, in our lives, in our...Although I'm not...I'm not angry about it...I don't know...I...my brother was a success story for me. Ja, I don't know, like the way he changed and the way he was, like towards the end...the way he felt about himself, the way he showed it to other people...I don't know...as if he knew he was going, I don't know...if that's the way it goes...(rather desperate), I don't know ...” (little laugh).

Interviewer: “You say he lived life fully and...”

Elena: “Ja, but towards the end he changed almost to a better person and a lot of people saw that and that's...that's why I say he was a beautiful story because even though he'd...um...maybe spoken aggressively before or...um...towards the...the end, I think it was the last three months, he was not...he was *soft*, I don't know, he wouldn't shout, he...you know, he told my mom, 'I love you', he wouldn't...used to treat her so badly sometimes...I don't know, he was content with himself, I think that's the biggest...and that's how I see it as a success story. My mother was very ...very...you know...angry about it...not angry...you know, disappointed. She'd always say, you know, like, 'My biggest fear is to lose a child', and I guess it happened. Ja. Um...I know even up to today, I don't think, ja...it's...the pain is still there. You miss him a lot, you know. I always wonder what he'd be like, you know, how...you know, what he'd say to me in a certain situation or whatever and...um...you know, how our kids would be one day and I think the saddest part is that I can associate *now* more because I can remember him now, you know, because I'm also young...In twenty

years time I won't...I won't be able to see him older and I think that...you almost feel like you're losing touch and that's very sad...Ja. It was beautiful...Um...he was loved ...a *lot*. I don't know if you heard about his funeral. That church was full. It was...Ja...He was a people's person. He loved going out and speaking with people...and, ja, he obviously did his rounds very well...(laughs) because he was very...That church was very full. I've never seen it that full for any funeral before. Not that I've been to many but I think those words came out of everybody's mouth. Um...a good...like a good...a good boy, he was, you know. He was naughty and he was like cheeky...but you know what I mean? Ja...and...You know how it happened?"

Interviewer: (shakes head)

Elena: "It was a motorbike accident. He'd gone away with two friends to S...ja, they all had bikes, they all went like on a run...ja, and one corner too fast..."(visibly upset - no tears).

Interviewer: "Mm ..."

Elena: "Ja. Although one picture I have in my mind...when we saw him...when we *first* saw him there at S. after he died...um...I remember his face because he wasn't injured. His face was still perfect. His body was still perfect. He...he just...obviously his neck had...um...you know, broken neck...but his face was still perfect and I'd never...I'd never seen him that beautiful in my life. He was a good looking boy, you know, but he...I don't know...he looked...he looked *beautiful*, I don't know what it was...peaceful...I don't know...he never, ever looked that good to me. Just...*cold*...and that...that was very..."

Interviewer: "So you were there. You went to identify him."

Elena: "Ja, ja we all went together...It was, ugh!...It was a terrible day. It's also...we drove...it was terrible, and the weather was terrible, it was cloudy and it was drizzling and the whole...ugh!... the whole thing was really ugh...and I'm a very...I think, like straight person, so *I* had to break it to my parents that he died, you know, cause they kind of knew but no one would like come forward and say it. So...I remember sitting at home...here...it was...because I was writing my Honours exams at university when it happened and I was sitting here with a friend and my cousin phoned me, she says to me they're on their way from J, I mustn't go anywhere...Is this detail too much?"

Interviewer: "No, this is fine. Please carry on."

Elena: "She said I mustn't go anywhere they're on their way. She said something happened to Tom. So I said, 'Okay well...like what...what?' No, she can't tell me. So then from there I knew, look something's happening. I phoned her back, 'Tell me if he's hurt. I'm old enough'...you know, 'Just tell me.' 'No, we're on our way'. Then I thought, no...obviously something was up. So I tried to phone friends...I phoned his friends who were there...obviously...but [they] must have switched off the phone, or something. It's not the easiest thing to say. Um...I phoned his girl friend...um... she didn't know anything. Eventually I got...a...a...anyway by the...you know, I got hold of [telephone] numbers...eventually she [brother's girlfriend] phoned me back and she told me, 'No, he died'. So basically I just went to the shop and...look it's going to get said...it's...you know, so I just...I told them... 'Tom is dead!' Very straight and not very tactful I guess but, ag, it's not the easiest thing to say and it's..."

Interviewer: "It's not..."

Elena: "Ja, and from there...my mother's *never* been the same person; my father's never...; our *lives* have never been the same... we're just not the same people, you know. It...it changes you a lot...um..."(long pause)

Interviewer: "How has it changed you?"

Elena: “Um...*harder*, I guess. I've become a lot harder...generally in life. I don't know...Um... religion-wise it's changed me. I used to be a lot more religious (self- conscious little laugh). Not a lot more but...um...I won't say I'm angry with God. I won't say I'm upset with Him but I've just *distanced* myself from Him...although lately it is better, you know, I am getting closer...but before I didn't...not that I wouldn't go to church on...'It's Easter, I'm not going', type of thing, you know, but I wouldn't *feel* it, as I felt it before...you know. I really don't know why, maybe you can explain that to me, I don't know...um...and I tried to feel stronger...especially for my parents...because...I see...I don't know, I guess I love my family a lot you know. We are very close as Mediterranean families are. And I think...um...I've tried to be there for them as much as I can, you know. In a funny way though, like my mother will never like sit down and like, 'Are you okay?' and...it's like she knows I'm there, you know, the things I do, but I won't necessarily like phone her up, 'Are you okay?' you know. But, ja, she knows I'm there. The love's there...the fundamental love is there...and things like that...”

Interviewer: “You feel that you don't have to say those things. Do you talk much about *him*?”

Elena: “About him...um...if...um...if I really feel like I need to, I will just say something but not really much. I won't elaborate my feelings as much, you know. I think it's...even though I am very close with my friends it's almost...I don't want to put them in that position because they feel awkward and...I might just say, you know, 'I wonder what my brother would think' or...I think, especially in the beginning I would just like hear happy stories about him and... 'ah, he would do this!' ...and I'd love to hear things he did and...I think initially I wanted to find out everything about him from all his friends that I didn't know because I obviously knew the brother-side of him, you know, and I didn't know the friend-side and I wanted to know the friend-side, the boyfriend-side, the every-side of him. And...I don't know, it's a strange thing...it's almost as if when he left, he left me with that little magic, I always say (spontaneous laugh)...with that little magic, ja. Like people will tell me, ja, like, 'How did you know...?' or...I don't know... especially when it comes to his friends, you know, and it was...I don't know...I just feel he left ...I can't explain, he had such an air about [to] him and such a...um...I don't know...(long pause) an *energy* ... an energy to him that I loved and in a way, I don't know, he's left me with it, I feel he's left me with it, but...which is beautiful and I think I'll carry it through with me...”(pause)

Interviewer: “So you're carrying something of him with you now.”

Elena: “Ja, a *feel* of his...Ja, but...um...I think I've...ja...it's been a fight, a struggle, you know, it's an emotional fight, you know. You always try and...block it...not...not...I...I won't say block ...ja, in a way it might be blocking it, I don't know, if I blocked it or dealt with it. I actually...I still don't know to this day. I don't really know...you know. Obviously I don't feel as much pain, you know because time has gone by...”

Interviewer: “Feels a bit better with time but it's still there?”

Elena: “Ja...I don't know what else...”

Interviewer: “I was just wondering if you could tell me a bit more...you say that you are a little confused about the way you feel about your religion. It's like the loss has struck at your faith?”

Elena: “Ja...I would say...which is not nice but I think it's just something I have to like work through. I can't...I think the worst part is I can't really pinpoint it because it's not anger because I'm not angry with God for taking him away because...um...He obviously has reasons or whatever to have done what He did...um...I don't hate Him for it...um...I don't know, I'm not angry with Him...I'm just, I guess...disappointed...Ja...I guess a bit disappointed...but, um, I must work my way through that, you know. I'm already much bet(ter)...well better...ja...just a bit more time...it will come. Ja.”

Interviewer: “You say that at the beginning you also were wanting to know more about him (brother) in terms of other relationships. Can you sort of...?”

Elena: “Elaborate on that?”

Interviewer: “Yes...”

Elena: “OK, my brother was *always-here* but he was *never-here* type of thing, you know. He was here but if we were having a family dinner he was in and then he was like out because he was going to see a friend or something. He was a busy body, he wanted to do everything, you know. I think he wanted to live life to the full...it was almost...he wanted to do anything and everything that he could, you know and it almost makes sense, you know, after he'd gone, I don't know... maybe that's *why* he was like life-hungry...Um...I don't know, any little story, you know, it's like almost like I can latch onto it for some *more*, or like remember him even *more*...so you know, having heard everybody's like little stories, or...especially closely afterwards, his friends would come up to me and...like a friend I'd never met and he says to me, ‘You don't know what your brother has done for me’, you know, he was...he did things that really touched people in...you know he'd obviously helped them with a specific problem but...I don't know...they'd come and tell me, ‘You don't know what he's done. He's the greatest person’, you know. ‘He's helped us so ... he's helped me’ - it was a specific guy - he said, ‘He's helped me so, so much. I'm so grateful’ ... and like hearing things like that, I think that makes me...you know, proud of him and...ja... ja, and...and you hear...That's like *real* stories you know...not just like what he wore...where he went, and...and...it's like actual...ja”..

Interviewer: “Like you said, he touched people's lives.”

Elena: “Ja!...and I think it was also very sad for his girl friend. She was...she also had a child, I guess, and he was almost like a father...you know...like a father-*figure*, I guess, for the child because the child was about seven when my brother...[died]”

Interviewer: “Had they been going out for long?”

Elena: “Ja...almost for like *five* years...they went out for long and that's another nice thing, you know, he took a girl and, *yes*, she is a beautiful girl and all, but she had a child and I think a lot of men won't take a woman, as beautiful as she might be, with a child. I know I discussed that with some of my friends and they were like, ‘I don't want the extra baggage’, type of thing, you know, and he took her and...shame the little boy's...ja, he...he was a father-figure to him...and it was ...it was beautiful. Just, he was...ja...he was a speed freak. Look, he is my brother he's...ja, he would always drive fast...and, ag, the fastest car and...the bike was just too powerful, I think, for him and he took a wrong corner...and ja...it was sad...”

Interviewer: “Very sad.”

Elena: “Ja...”(long pause)

Interviewer: “And your relationship with him, what was that like?”

Elena: “With *him*?...um...I had a weak spot for him (laughs). I did, ja...He was two years...ja, three years in...ja, two years older than me. Um...I think if I had a problem and I'd really...you know...I'd go and sit down with him, although I would rather pick a friend, you know, because the girls usually understand better or whatever...you know, but if it was a problem that...you know...I think I'd like approach him on that, you know, we were close in that way. I think he ... um...he loved me a lot for what...okay, obviously for what I was, but [also for] what I did for him because every time he'd ask me for something I'd tell him, ‘This is the last time I'm doing it, do you understand?’ and the next time he asked me I'd do it again, you know, that's the kind of soft spot I had for him, and I would always tell him, ‘No, I'm not going to do it!’ and ...Ag, we used to fight a lot as well, you know, not speak to each other for like...(laughs)...like a week or something (laughs) and then, ag, it was fine, and...ja... it was fine. But I think...ja...I think he... he respected me a lot and that...that means like the world to me, you know. He'd obviously told my friends, you know, ‘She's...she's the *best* in our family’ ...you

know, she... 'She doesn't...she doesn't obviously understand her value as much as she should', you know, and, 'She can just ask for anything and she'll get it.' That's how much, you know, he thought that I was like worth...it was nice, you know, because he *never* really...he *never* really communicated his feelings to me. We never had the type of relationship like, 'I love you,' or...or...you know...it was...I don't...I think it wouldn't mean very much...it's like you *feel* it's there, so you don't have to say it that much. You know, they're always *there*...you take for granted that they're always *there* until... And I think...ja...I would have *loved* to have spent more time with him but I guess that's impossible...my mother says the same and...but I...I would have really loved to have spent more time with him. He was always just [so busy]...So difficult, you know, life gets so busy...the one person gets this, the other gets that, and you don't really spend as much time with each other as you should, and I think especially us with businesses there is not really much family time, you know...it's a lot...um... 'got to work, got to work!'...Ja, my father is also taking it a bit...he's obviously not as, you know, forward as my mom. My mother like...she'll express it more and she'll cry and she'll talk to him more or whatever she, you know, she feels helps her. My father is more quiet about it. It's also hit him hard, I think...um...He, my brother, was very like similar in character to my father, you know, so that's why like the things that my brother did my father would understand and you know he...Ja...I think he understood him *very* well...because he was also...himself...Ja, and it...it...Ja, I think the worst part for me is to see my...my parents like this, you know...um...it, it like hurts me and it upsets me, you know, because it's...ugh!...it's just not the same people, you know, and it's just really sad...it's really, really sad..."

Interviewer: "So it's a double loss in a way. You lost your brother and..."(interrupted)

Elena: "Ja, ja. It feels like I've lost my...not *lost* my family but, it's ja, definitely changed us in many ways...Ja, ag, and all his things we've left, you know, and...I guess it's like a way of not... trying not to let go? I don't know...you don't want to let go, you just keep his [belongings]...as long as you can..."(half-hearted laugh)

Interviewer: [unclear on tape - keeping a part of him with you - brief discussion on letting go; no rules about when, how, or what a family should do - part of the grief - when you're *ready* you will do it]

Elena: "Ja, it's just how you *feel*. (long pause) Ja...Mm...I can't think of anything else..."(nervous little laugh)

Interviewer: "You have another brother?"

Elena: "Ja, an older brother, ja. I think for him it was a bit easier because he's living, you know, in another home with his wife and...I think it was easier for him, you know, like you're *here* but then you go away to your *home* and it's not so, you know, difficult whereas for me I'd live it, eat it, breathe it all the time, you know. I won't say it's any easier on *him*, you know, I won't say that either. It's just ..ja...it was just *different* in that way...um...I don't know, I felt...I felt really strong...I don't know how I did it especially close to when it happened, because...I...it was: 'I'll take it all and I'll deal with it', and I think...ja...from leaving...my Honours exams, I was writing at that point in time, I didn't write my first one (exam) because it was a week after his death, I wrote all the others and I passed them and then I went straight into the shop and then I just took it in my hands, 'Come, I'll do it' you know, because...obviously because of the emotional loss my parents couldn't deal with things and , I mean, you...you can't stop life, unfortunately...it feels like you want to stop life...you don't want to know anything but I mean you...it would be worse to sit in the house and cry all day."

Interviewer: "Gosh, you were strong. I mean it's almost like, as you say, you felt you had to keep going and it was also keeping them going in a way..."

Elena: "Ja. Yet I felt very weak. You know, like the way I looked. I'd lost a lot of weight, you know...um...ja, terrible...(long pause) And I hate going to his grave...ja...(little laugh). I don't see the point of it...I don't...it was...it's his last like...physical state type thing, you know, but I don't

want to associate a graveyard or anything with him. I think he was too happy a soul to ... you know...to associate that and...I really don't like it. I don't go...I'm hardly involved. Ja, I'll go ...like (clicks tongue) five times a year maybe, or six, but I don't like it. I'd rather look at a photo and that way..."

Interviewer: "Remember him that way."

Elena: "Ja. I hate to see his name on that cross. I think that's ugh...it's just...I don't know, I guess it hits you in the face, but I don't like it. You see my mom is totally different. She *loves* to go. Every weekend she'll...flowers and the whole thing, ja...(little laugh). I don't know...just different, ja, just different..."

Interviewer: "She feels closer when she's there whereas for you, you feel closer if you think about him or look at a photo or...remember him as he was."

Elena: "Ja. And I love to see his friends, you know, especially people he was close with although it's very difficult to communicate with them because when they see me or whatever, they...they obviously [think], 'Tom', you know...get a picture of him, so for *them* it's difficult as well as for me because I can sense that, even though I would love to sit down and ask them, you know, 'Tell me a story', or...'What did he say when you did this?' you know, but...ja...it's not like that, unfortunately..."

Interviewer: "You sense that they might feel that hurt..."

Elena: "Ja...ja, they do...they do...Ja, death's a very strange thing (little laugh) to deal with...I fear it...(little laugh). I fear death. Ja. Like I've seen...you know, before it has never really happened to anyone...it has never touched home. It's not really an issue, you know, because...look people die, but yes, I guess, they're old and things like that but from experiencing my brother's death I fear...I fear losing my parents...or anybody close to me, you know...it's just like..."(long pause)

Interviewer: "Suddenly it is something that's real. It can happen."

Elena: "Ja...Mm..."

Interviewer: "And when you say there is this fear, how does it affect you?"

Elena: "Well I don't fear it every day and stuff but...um...it doesn't really...I won't say it really affects me...I just...I'd appreciate maybe people mo(re)...like my parents, more...because I know they won't be here anymore...you know, like forever type of thing, because you've been born and they've always been here type of thing and you...and, you know, they will always be here type of thing but through the death I've basically realised it doesn't happen...you know, they're not always going to be there, so I appreciate them more in ways, you know...ja..."

Interviewer: "You've become aware of that possibility, of your own mortality and of people close to you. So it's not your own death that you fear?"

Elena: "No, not my own. No. I don't think I'll die soon (hearty laugh). You get some people who say, 'No, I'll never live old'. I don't know if they know, but I...I think I'll live [to be] old" (laughs again).

Interviewer: "You say this is really the first death experience you've had. You haven't had a grandparent..."

Elena: "A grandmother, but she was overseas so it's not really, you know, you're not...although I was very close to her when I was little. She brought me up. Apparently my mom was [busy]...and...she used to stay here for a while (came from overseas) and...ja...a beautiful woman, you know... like

...in her heart, you know...and...I lost her but that was almost, you know, she was *old* and I wasn't *that* close, you know, with her as I was with my brother, you know. Ja, so it was...um... (long pause) I don't know, it's harder..."

Interviewer: "I was just wondering can you remember doing things with your brother when you were little. Three years is not a big age difference."

Elena: (laughs heartily) "Ja, fighting."

Interviewer: "Very natural!"

Elena: (laughs) "Ja, I remember ... I remember him ... like we were playing hopscotch down this little thing here (points to the spot outside the kitchen window) and he'd trip me and I'd fall and then I'd cry. I remember things like that very clearly. And I remember like running frantically to the phone to phone my mother and tell her... 'huhhh!'...and as I'd get to the phone, he'd like pull the cord out, you know...he loved to tease his little sister, you know (laughs). Especially when you're little, you know...when you're younger...it's like more of an age gap. I think lately it wasn't that much of an age gap. We'd go out more, you know, together, whereas before it's like, 'Don't speak to my friends!' and that, you know...but...um...(long pause)...Ja, I was always covering up for him, I think (laughs), very often...I was always, ja, picking up his pieces and like covering up for him which he *never* knew really because I would never tell him, 'Guess what I did?', you know but...um...ja, I don't know, I just did it...I think he would have appreciated it." (laughs).

Interviewer: "You would cover up for him...so he would go out and not supposed to or something like that?"

Elena: "Ja, something like that and ja, I'd be at the shop and I'd tell my dad...look small things ... I'd always let him go and get away with murder sometimes, you know...um...as I said, soft spot ... he was a soft spot, you know. Ja, ja."

Interviewer: "He was the closest in age to you?"

Elena: "Yes, although when we were younger, with my oldest brother I was...we were much closer... ja, it was like almost we'd always go like the two of us and then, 'Oh, come let's just call Tom'. You know the stage. It was like that. So I was *very* close to my oldest brother but...um...I think we'd...that changed...there wasn't...I don't think anyone was closer than anyone else for quite a few years before his death."

Interviewer: "Do I understand correctly that your elder brother was quite close to you and he'd take you along and exclude Tom?"

Elena: "Ja. Not in a big way or [that] we did it for years...maybe like for a few months...at a stage. I just...maybe it's just left a mark in my head because my mother...I remember the one time she said, you know, 'Tell Tom to come with you guys,' and I, 'Okay', you know. It was never a problem but we just didn't *think* of it. It wasn't like a *thing* and it didn't become like a thing between us ever, you know. It was never like you don't ask...or...it was never like that...ja."

Interviewer: "Lot of memories."

Elena: "Ja. I think what I hate most about this is that the older like I get the more distant the memories will become, you know. I won't remember his smile or the way he said something, you know, or...and I think that saddens me most because it's obviously distancing him from me, you know, and like...sometimes (clicks tongue) the way I say something it's exactly like *he* said it, you know, or like the *way* he said it, and I *love* it. I just...I *love* it, although not everyone will realise it obviously

because they don't know him or...but...ag...I *love* it, it just like...it brings a smile to my face, you know..."

Interviewer: "Whenever you say something like he would have said it?"

Elena: "Yes, that reminds me of him. I won't say it like on purpose...you know, like I'll say it because he said it, but obviously from being together and stuff you pick up things he says you know and as I say it, it will come out...and *Wow!*...(delighted smile)...ja..."

Interviewer: "Almost like a little part of him lives on."

Elena: "Ja, but , as I said I'm just scared it...becomes...like you forget...ja, that's very sad.... (long pause)...Ja, and the fact that like he can't be here for like my big days, for instance, you know. I would love to...you know, one day when I get married, I would have loved him to be there, you know...and...ja...that's really sad, you know, because...Ja, just being *there*...you know...being *him* (laughs)...Ja..."

Interviewer: "Having him there to share with you."

Elena: "Ja..."(long pause)...

Interviewer: "So you say that for the future as well anticipating that gap makes you feel very sad."

Elena: "Ja-no...definitely...(long pause)...Ja, I was godmother not so long ago...you know, I would have loved to see how he would...you know, what he'd say, or...you know..."

Interviewer: "So you obviously shared a lot and this is also something important for a brother or a sister who are close, to continue sharing those special occasions, special events."

Elena: "Ja...um..."(long pause)

Interviewer: "Has the loss impacted on you in any other way. I see there is a lot of missing..."

Elena: "I...I guess just like dealing...dealing with it or fighting it, or whatever, you know...it's been very hard...and um...ja, I don't know. I know like...my entire like being...it's not been, you know, good...as good, you know...I obviously...you know, I'm not looking as healthy, not being as healthy, what shall we call it...you know. I think it's normal that people...if you're not like psychologically fine it like shows on you, type of thing. And a lot of stress. I lost a lot of hair, I think, initially and stuff, you know...um...Ja...it's just...it's like a fight, you know...it's a fight and especially seeing your parents like that, it's almost...you don't want to accept it like that...I don't want to accept them as they are, you know, these are my parents...um...comparing to what they were, you know, as people...and like a smile...Every time I see my mother laugh it's like, I get so *happy* because she doesn't do this, you know, often. Like to *giggle*, or like...especially lately she's been like *talking* more and it's like: '*Wow!*', you know, I'm glad she can like almost touch upon it again because it's...it's, you know, it *hurts* to see them like that...a lot. I don't blame them for it, you know, I don't blame anyone for anything...it's like, no one *did* it, you know. It's just that's the way it's become, you know..."

Interviewer: "It's the way it is and it takes time..."

Elena: "Ja..."

Interviewer: "You said you went on holiday last year. You tried to get away for a bit, you said."

Elena: “Oh yes, well, ja...ag, you know. You go, you stay for a while and you come back to exactly the same thing...so...it's...it's not...even though you might talk about it and deal with it, it's almost like you have to come back to the exact same thing...so...It was nice on holiday...ja, (laughs)...ja, even th(ough)...although I spoke *about* him a *lot*, you know, because obviously there (i.e. overseas) everybody wanted to know about him but...and obviously seeing all my family and they all had questions to ask because I was the first one to go after his death, you know, so they'd all, ‘and how are your friends?’; and ‘how is this?’; and ‘Tell me’...and like one of my cousins, extremely close [to] me, but she like couldn't believe it...she would like: ‘Tell me. Tell me stories’, and we would discuss it...and, you know, it wasn't as if I never...as if I went there and I just blocked him off, never spoke to anyone about him. He was very much a part of that but it was...I think maybe not dealing with my parents, you know, it was like...like a weight off my shoulders. Although I don't mind doing it and I do it with the greatest of ...but it is a...a ...responsibility...”

Interviewer: “You feel the responsibility.”

Elena: “Ja, absolutely. Its not just something...you know...”

Interviewer: “It's almost like it (the situation) makes demands on you without them making demands.”

Elena: “No they don't...they really don't ask for anything.”

Interviewer: “But you feel it.”

Elena: “Ja...ja, towards them, you know. Like I'm me. I just want to [help]...if I can...(laughs)...ja, it's just that you don't think that you're that strong, you know. I've obviously become a lot stronger. ...Ja, it's...ja: ‘Okay, so take it when it happens’, you know ...”

Interviewer: “You found the strength somewhere...”

Elena: “Ja. I don't know how I was that strong. I really don't...God send?...(laughs)...ja...”

Interviewer: “Maybe ...”

Elena: “Mm...”(Long pause).

Interviewer: “Can you think of anything else?”

Elena: “Initially it was difficult because you don't...I am not the type of person who likes to show my feelings to a lot of people and even though like my friends would come maybe the next day I wouldn't like burst out crying or like go... ‘huuuh’...you know. I'm not that type of person and I like to maybe share it with one or two people I feel very close to me, you know. So in that way it was ... I think I actually put people in an awkward position because they'd come and I'd smile at them and, ‘How are you?’ type thing, you know, and they'd like but, ‘Hang on...!’, you know, and it's as if I don't...I mean I would smile at them although inside me you could see that I was hurting and like sad, you know, obviously not the same as I would *now*...it would be...you can't compare but my friends would still tell me, ‘If you want to talk about it, just say’, ‘Come and tell me’, you know, and...I don't know, I just don't open up to people easily at all.”

Interviewer: “Were you always like this or is it since the loss experience?”

Elena: “I think I'm more now...I'm more closed now than I was before. I don't let people into my space easily...like...like personal space. You know I'll get along with people and I'll speak but...um...not just to anyone and everyone. I won't just go...if I'm upset I'll try not to show it to a lot of people, or, you know...(Long pause). Ja...I don't know what else...”

Interviewer: “This is fine. Unless you have something else you would like to add?”

Elena: “I don’t know if you meet again as souls or if it happens like that, but if you do I’d love... I’d love...to somehow be with him again if it is, because I don’t know if there are answers but... these are theories, everyone’s got a different theory, you know. I don’t know, I’ve never been there and come back, you know.” (laughs)...

Interviewer: “Nobody’s been there and come back to tell.”

Elena: “That’s exactly it...But geez, I’d be the happiest chappie! (laughs) Ja...And I think I am really glad that I can still look on him in a positive light, you know, with a smile on my face or... you know, like share a story about him with...and whatever...ja, I think that’s very nice and I’d hate to obviously like feel the intensity of my mother’s pain, you know what I’m saying...um... Obviously when I have a child of my own then I’ll understand what it would be like but...I don’t want to look at *him* in that light...I don’t want to look at him as...like a *pain*, you know...it’s obviously very confused feelings because it is *that*, and it is...but I’d like to like remember him as a happy person...not as a happy person... in a happy light...um...you know...you know and it’s like...ja, I don’t know...I’m not very good with words...”

Interviewer: “You’re doing fine and it’s an interesting idea, that you don’t want to remember him with pain.”

Elena: “Ja, ja. I want to remember him as happy as he always was, you know, the energy he had and that...that you know I just don’t want to ever let go of that and just see it as, ‘Tom: tragedy; Tom: dead’, you know; ‘Tom: bike accident’. I don’t want to see that, I want to see like, ‘Tom: happy’...Like he used to hoot a thousand times before he came in the house, you know, that... that energy that he had...he was always like, like...”

Interviewer: “Like: ‘Here I am!’”

Elena: (Laughs) “Ja, ja, ja! You know, and that’s what I want to remember and like associate with his name, you know, and that beautiful person people saw in him, you know, and the things he did for people and like the way he touched my heart and...um...”

Interviewer: “You want to associate him with the good memories, the good things. Have you been able to let go in the sense of being able to cry about him?”

Elena: “Ja. Initially, ja, it was very difficult. I remember I wouldn’t cry...at all. My mother like, ‘Please cry’. I’d say like, ‘I can’t. I cannot cry’. I don’t know why, what, how...and if I did, I did for a little bit all by myself or maybe...on the *odd* occasion with a friend and for so short...I don’t know. I *couldn’t* and I don’t know what it was and it wasn’t always like that because I remember boyfriend stories before that...uhh!, if a boyfriend upset me a little bit I would be like in tears, you know, I’d get upset and cry bitterly and then it was over, you know, but with my *brother* it was *not* like that, I don’t know *why*. Was it...I don’t know if it was being strong enough but it doesn’t mean that you’re not strong if you cry, you know...if you cry it doesn’t mean that you’re not strong, but I just, you know, I couldn’t cry. I don’t know why...”

Interviewer: “There is no right or wrong way of dealing with the loss but there are phases that you go through, you know. Maybe it is part of the denial...”

Elena: “Maybe. Ja...”

Interviewer: “You’re still holding on. It’s okay. I don’t think you ever let go fully...as you say there are important occasions when your grief becomes more intense and then it gets better again.”

Elena: “Ja.” (long pause)

Interviewer: “You said that you're getting back into your career...”

Elena: “Ja. I think I was doing something just for *me*, you know, which I know is...I'm not really a selfish person, you know, I'll do a lot for others if I know them...Um...I don't know. I guess I did this for *me*. I think I was just accepting something for *me* and not living...ja, just for me basically ... It was a path I was taking, you know, and...ja, I won't say specifically my goals are in that direction but it was...it was something that I...if I didn't do...if I didn't do I think I'd regret one day...if I never did that for me, I would turn around one day and say I should have and I didn't want to do that, for me. So I might as well give it a try.”

Interviewer: “Yes, and you say you're working in a laboratory.”

Elena: “A research company. No, it's not a [laboratory] ... but its marketing research, you know, it's business orientated. I did a B.Com.... Ja...[It's] interesting...”

Interviewer: “You're enjoying it.”

Elena: “Mm. It's nice. Totally different to...like the business. It's different to work for someone else and [to work] for you[rself], as well. That is my latest dilemma here (laughs)...you know, should I work for someone else or should I work for me.”

Interviewer: “How do you feel about working for somebody else?”

Elena: “I enjoy the environment, I enjoy the...the...it's obviously so much more like intellectual and you deal with...the people you deal with are so much better than what you deal with in the businesses and...um...ja, it's a communication thing. It's just...ja. And you feel like you're always furthering yourself in this...obviously my career, because obviously I'm learning and it's a whole new learning experience, whereas the business it's...you know...okay I'm...you know, I'm basically the boss...you *do* learn I guess but [it is] not as stimulating...”

Interviewer: “You're doing something for you that is both stimulating and interesting.”

Elena: “Yes...I don't know what else you want to know...?”(bit distracted because had to return to the family business)

Interviewer: “This is fine Elena. Thank you so much for sharing your experience with me.”

I asked if she had a photo of her brother to which Elena responded: "Oh yes, lots". Seemed happy to show me her brother as she wants to remember him.

APPENDIX C

FORMS

FORM A:**Letter to Research Participant***Doctoral Research Project – The experience of the loss of a sibling*

I am a registered Clinical Psychologist and am engaged in a Doctoral study on the loss of a sibling (PhD. Psychology, University of Pretoria). In my professional and personal capacity I have been involved with bereaved siblings and am interested in further exploring the individual's lived experience of the loss of a brother or sister.

Your participation in the search to understand the essence of this experience would be helpful to the many young people who go through such a loss. I would be very grateful if you would be prepared to share your experience with me in an interview to be arranged at a time convenient for you.

This is not an evaluation. You will not be required to fill in any questionnaires and no specific assessment procedures or tests will be applied. The only requirement is that you attempt to describe in as much detail as possible what it was like for you to lose your brother or sister. Please note that there is no one right or proper way to experience the loss of a sibling. I am interested only in your own experience of this loss.

The interview will be audio-taped and it is likely that some descriptions will be recorded in the present study but the names of all participants will be omitted and other identifying information will be changed in order to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. Audio-taped recordings as well as all written descriptions will be treated in strict confidence.

It is possible that the recall of certain memories may be painful for you and I would like to offer a follow-up interview during which you will have the opportunity to discuss your feelings related to our initial interview and at which time we can also share reflections on what this loss has meant to you.

Should you be prepared to participate in the above study, please read through the enclosed Consent Form which you may sign following the interview.

Please note that you are at liberty to withdraw your consent to participate in the study at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Eleferia (Freda) Woodrow

FORM B:**Participant Consent Form**

Doctoral Research Project : The experience of the loss of a sibling.

I hereby consent to participate in the above doctoral research project on the loss of a sibling and agree to share my experience of the loss of my brother/sister in an interview with Mrs E. Woodrow at a time and place that will be decided jointly. My participation is voluntary and I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed and that the data will be used for the above thesis.

I understand further that confidentiality will be maintained throughout and that my name and any other identifying information will be changed or disguised in order to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. Audio-tapes and transcriptions of the interview will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used solely for the purpose of the above research project. Should the need for further research arise, my written consent will be obtained prior to *any* further use of the data.

I understand that I can withdraw my consent to participate in the study at any time.

Research Participant: _____ Date : _____

Telephone No. () _____

Researcher : _____ Date : _____

Telephone No. () _____

FORM C:

Thank you Letter

Date _____

Dear _____

Thank you for meeting with me in the extended interview and for sharing your experience of the loss of your sibling. Your willingness to share your feelings, thoughts and recollections is greatly appreciated. It is contributions such as yours that can expand psychological knowledge in the field.

I sincerely value your participation in this research. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the present study, or wish to take up the offer of a follow-up interview, please do not hesitate to contact me. I may be reached either at (012) 8020945 or at 082-6962383.

With very best regards,

Eleferia (Freda) Woodrow.

APPENDIX D
Preliminary Study

Written Descriptions

Volunteer 1: Angie

As part of the preliminary study for the thesis, I contacted Angie telephonically to ascertain whether she was willing to participate in a study on the experience of sibling loss. She readily agreed to provide a written description of her experience to the following research question:

“Could you please describe how you felt at the time of the death of your sister and how you experience the loss now”

Background Information:

At the time of volunteering to participate in the study, Angie was 23 years old and pursuing her studies in the Human Sciences at the local university. Her sister accidentally shot herself with the family revolver at the age of 16 years. Angie was 13 years old at the time. Her parents were totally devastated. She had two younger brothers who appeared to be unaffected by the death. Angie was referred for psychotherapy because of behavioural problems and a reluctance to speak about the death of her sister.

Angie's written description was followed by an interview where she was asked to elaborate on certain statements. Her responses follow the written description and are indicated in bold script:

Original written description

The death of my sister when I was 13 years old was a pivotal point in my life. I had just entered high school and her death was sudden and a shock. My family was tested severely, luckily though, my younger brothers were very young. It is difficult to describe how I felt when she died. At first I was numb. I avoided talking about her at all, even with my parents. I think I mostly did not know how to deal with what my parents were feeling. I did not want to feel her absence and so I learnt to close off myself to what I was feeling. If it had been up to me, I would have just ignored that anything had happened at all. I merely wanted to continue with life as it always was.

Anger then took over me and I rebelled as strongly as I could against my parents. I broke free from the person I had been my whole life. Looking back on those two years after her death, I realise that I luckily found a balance between who I was and who I always wanted to be – *her*. I am now me, though.

What stays with me the most is that I have surpassed her age and her experiences. I am now the oldest and I'm paving my own way and the course that my brothers may follow. I cannot turn to her for her advice though. I guess I miss that the most. I am the first in my family to achieve the large milestones. My sister's death has taught me to value and treasure my family. I know how quickly everything can change, so suddenly they can be taken from you. I am not as independent as I would like to be, in that I mean I still have an intense fear of losing my family. We are extremely close, and I fear my feelings may prevent me from pursuing opportunities in the future.

Follow-up interview:

Interviewer: "You avoided talking about her at all?"

Angie: “I was always the quiet one and preferred to deal with things on my own. It was a stage when I wanted to go out but I felt guilty about this...as if I was not allowed to have any fun. The family more or less ignored the children. It was always: ‘how is your mom doing? You must

help her.' This suited me in a way because I preferred not to talk about her (i.e. about her sister). I wanted everything to be normal again but in retrospect I realise that it is a heavy burden and it is better to talk about the loss than keep it all inside; all to myself"

Interviewer: "You mentioned your brothers..."

Angie "My brothers were young. Only later that I realised how badly the death had impacted on my nine-year old brother. He never really wants to talk about her but I know it affects him badly ... he was very close to her and I am not sure whether mom or dad ever discussed the death with him."

Interviewer: "Can you tell me more about 'breaking free' from the person that you had been?"

Angie: "I became the eldest in the family ... big change from always looking to someone else for guidance and advice, to breaking the ice with all new milestones. I could see when I became the eldest how much easier it was for the second child...for my brother now. Maybe because he's a boy as well but I think mainly because the eldest takes a lot of the flack and paves the way for the younger ones."

Interviewer: "How did you feel immediately after the death?"

Angie: "At the time of the funeral some children from school wanted to come to the funeral and when they asked me if they could come I said, 'No!' ... such a weird response. I used to get so angry with people who felt that *they* had lost someone valuable. I still don't understand why I said 'No'. All I can think is that I felt it was a family thing. Also I had to go to school and face everybody and it would be harder if they had been to the funeral and shared the experience with us. Actually I said 'No' to those that I felt were not particularly close to her. Good friends were asked to come. The others just seemed curious. Still I think it was a weird reaction. There were also rumours of suicide ... perhaps I wanted to protect her memory and reputation. It was not suicide but we were always confronted by these stories. How I feel now? I feel that I have grown a lot because of this experience – I have become softer, more outgoing, more expressive of my emotions. I have also got a lot closer to my family – mom and dad, the whole family. There were other changes too. Four years after the death, my parents adopted two children. I cannot imagine what life would have been like without them ... they have enriched our lives. They were not a replacement for Dawn. My parents wanted to adopt before her death but the church would not allow them to do so because there were 'too many children in the family.' Four years later, when adoption was the furthest thing from their minds, my parents got a call ... two needy children. I feel terrible saying this but this would never have happened if Dawn had lived. They filled a gap at the time and got mom back into life ... but were not a replacement for Dawn."

Following the above description and the interview, the research question was rephrased in order to obtain a more spontaneous, non-reflective description of the loss experience. A modified form of the "Letter to Research Participants" (Form A) containing the following research question was subsequently posted to the second and third volunteers in the preliminary study requesting a written description:

"Could you please describe in as much detail as possible, just as the thoughts and feelings come to you, what you experienced at the time of the death of your brother or sister. Please focus on your feelings, on what it was like for you, at the time of the loss and how you feel now".

Volunteer 2 - Mary

Mary was twelve years old when she lost her twenty-one-year old brother in an aeroplane accident fifty-one years ago. She has one surviving elder brother. At the time of volunteering to participate in the study, Mary was 63 years old, married with a family of her own.

Written Description:

Fifty one years ago when I was twelve years old and a boarder at school in K - I was summoned to the Headmistress' office to be told that my brother, nine years older, had been killed in a small aeroplane accident on his first solo flight. I can remember the shock and disbelief that I felt then - I spent a lot of time in the School Chapel talking to God about why him, and where was he now? I remember being fetched to be with my parents and other brother (3 years older) at our great friend's farm in M. My Mother was absolutely stricken with shock and had tick bite fever on top of it. My father was also in a bad way - after the post mortem there was a burial in M. to which I did not go - in hindsight regrettable as there was no finality of goodbye for me. I have never been to see his grave but my brother has, and perhaps that is what I will do this year. After the initial wave of press photos and letters of condolence from his friends in D. and schoolmates in the U.K. a blanket of silence came over us. My Mother couldn't hear or speak his name without breaking down. Photos of him were put away so the only persons to speak to were my father and brother until we met with a friend he had made in D. who was a poet and an artist as was John although he had joined big business in the form of T. Bros. Incorp. So I developed quite a crush on him as a surrogate! That was four years later. A few months after the accident I changed schools to be a day scholar and although I had been to umpteen different schools I took a long time to make friends this time. I became quite a loner, introspective, I read a lot and because I was the only one at home - I was in adult company most of the time. Then I bought myself a horse which made a great difference to my life. I was able to get out for hours on end, explore a large area of H. and northern suburbs of M. (no danger in those days except summer storms). These were marvellous times to think and brother John became a hero to my mind - somebody who had achieved a lot in his short life - the ache of loneliness and regret that I hadn't known him better. Due to the war years when he was stranded in England for 6 years - he only came into my life when I was 8 so I would never know him as an adult - just a kid sister. The atmosphere at home was sombre - my mother who used to be a gay person - play the piano, have parties with sing songs - was not the same anymore; compounded by the fact we had only settled in South Africa the year before the tragedy - we only knew a few people. The M. family was very good to us and our happiest times were with them. They taught me how to ride a bicycle and horses and enjoy farm life (which I do to this day!) Then the school holidays were highlights when brother Jack came home and sometimes brought friends, so life became slowly more normal. Looking back I feel that I was rather robbed of my youth and was far too mature for my age. By eighteen I felt "old" - seen too much, felt too much, quite world-weary in fact. I was confirmed an ... but we never went to church as a family (my Mother couldn't forgive God for her loss) which was a pity in hindsight. The spiritual life means a lot to me now.

The third volunteer was unable to provide a written description but was very willing to *speak* about her loss experience and an interview was arranged. Her description is included in the main body of the thesis.