WALKING THE GRIEF JOURNEY WITH SIBLINGS AGED 60

YEARS AND OLDER

by

Deborah Ellen Deeter

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND
EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

2017

                                   Abstract

In this dissertation, I explore the grief process in older adults (60 years

and older) after they have experienced the death of a sibling. My focus

was on the collection of stories from the lived experience of grief.

Previous research has focused on grief in childhood, adolescence, young

adulthood, and middle adulthood. Existing research on older aged adults

has focused primarily on mental health concerns for the surviving sibling.

I combined 2 sources of narrative inquiry to create the narrative

methodology. Narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly,

2000) and dialogical narrative analysis (Frank, 2005, 2010, 2012)

provided the parameters for the creation and analysis involved in this

inquiry. I share 6 stories in this inquiry: 5 from the participants and 1

from me as the author. I gathered the stories by engaging in and

recording conversations. Each conversational partner participated further

by reading and reviewing her/his retold story. I included the

conversational partners' responses as integral aspects of the told story. I

obtained data when coding excerpts from the stories into unique themes

and group themes. The unique themes in each story linked into the 5

group themes identified: on grief and death; the family footprint; holding

connection; story reflections; and how we met. The discoveries offer

insight into the grief experience of the older sibling. The four unique

learnings are grief is influenced by other stories; shock is the response to

the death of a sibling; relational time is not chronological time; and

siblings create the bridge for the transforming family story. The learnings

from the inquiry describe the importance of understanding grief as a

process in the primary relationship of older siblings.

Acknowledgements

As I bring this inquiry to a sensible end, I am astounded at what an intense and amazing journey this has been in my life story. I have had the privilege of sharing numerous intersecting stories with others.

First, I want to acknowledge the five bereaved siblings who stepped forward to become conversational partners with me. Words are limited in my effort to thank each of you for your generosity and trust in me when you shared your intimate stories of your beloved siblings. Thank you.

At the top of my gratitude list is Dr. Donald Sawatzky, who came out of a serene lifestyle to support me in bringing this dissertation story of siblings and our grief to life. Your generosity of thought and time, curious prompts, and complete belief in me were foundational in the creation of this thesis. It seems fitting to share with you the beginning of another story: In Siberia a tiger walks, breathing story into the world . . .

To Dr. Sheila McNamee, your positive constructions in difficult moments created bursts of energy that kept me moving forward. You were consistently available and a believer in possibility—you are a true gift. Thank you.

To Prof. dr. Gerrit Loots, thank you for your time and energy in moving my conversations and story forward. I am grateful for your insightful reflections and challenges in honouring the spoken and unspoken narratives in the world.

Thank you to the members of my committee, Prof. drs. Veerle Soyez, Liesbeth De Donder, and Leen Van Brussel.

Thank you also to Dr. Robert Neimeyer for the discussions and guidance. I appreciated the intriguing and meaningful conversations we shared in many different places around the world.

I had colleagues, friends, and family who stepped forward to participate as a response community throughout this inquiry; thank you so very much for your insight and conversations.

Thank you to Mitzi Faulks for your dedication in providing accurate and thoughtful transcriptions. They are wonderful!

To Lori and Karen with Editarians—thank you for rescuing me from my bewilderment in creating a formatted document. Your cheering section was greatly appreciated.

To my father, thank you for your stories, conversations, and insights. You are an inspiration to me.

To Beth and Jazz, who accompanied me every day throughout this multiyear project, I apologize for all the 1:00 am to 3:00 am writing and pacing. Your willingness to join your energy and belief with mine in opening space for bereaved sibling stories to emerge has been astounding to me. I will be forever grateful.

To our siblings, you are forever in our stories.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Prologue

Sobbing, my client exclaimed, "Nobody has ever asked me about my sister. I guess they assume . . . I'm old . . . and it doesn't matter. Or maybe I shouldn't feel this way" (personal communication, February 2009). I watched as her eyes filled with tears, and between sobs, she said that her older sister had died 2 years prior. I was in the process of conducting an assessment with this new client. The client had referred herself to therapy for what she identified as an increasing experience of anxiety in her life. She was 63 years old at the time of our first session. As we worked through the assessment, I asked her if she had experienced any significant deaths in her life. She affirmed that her mother had died when she was 7 years old. I asked her if anyone else close to her had died. That is the point at which she began to cry and told me haltingly about her older sister's death. During our time together, I searched for information on older sibling bereavement and was not able to locate anything that was specific to the experience. Of all the people I have had the privilege of spending time with, there was an aspect of this story that impacted me differently. It impacted me both as a clinician and as a bereaved sibling. It was the occurrence of this client's story at a

significant moment in my own life that prompted me to begin a detailed search for information and further conversations.

Over the years as a clinician, I have had the privilege of spending time with bereaved family members of all ages. In my assessment process, I began to include a question that asked for sibling history. I have found that whenever I introduce the topic or ask a question about sibling relationships, there was usually someone who identified that their life had changed from the death of a sibling.

As I formalized my search of the literature, it came to my attention that there was written research about the experience of grief from the young and middle adulthood but limited information from adults over the age of 60 years. When I surveyed the literature across the lifespan, I found that it primarily focused on children, adolescents, young adults, and middle-aged adults (Marshall & Davies, 2011; Packman, Horsley, Davies, & Kramer, 2006). In my professional life, I had numerous opportunities to explore narratives about grief from a family perspective. What I did discover was that there was limited literature about the grief experience for siblings aged 60 and older.

My sister died from cancer in 2005. I was stunned when she told me that she had stage 4 cancer. Shortly after she was admitted to the

palliative ward at the local hospital, I moved into her room and stayed

with her for 13 days and nights. On the day that she died, I was there, I

watched her take her last breath, and I watched as her facial features

settled into stillness. There was no doubt in my mind that my sister had

died.

I do not remember meeting my sister Annette; rather she met me.

She was 10 years old when I was born. Over the decades, we each had

our own life challenges, we had differences of opinion, yet I knew and

she knew, each of us would always show up for the other one, physically,

by telephone, mail, or email. We dissected different aspects of life

together, became cheerleaders for one another when life events seemed

daunting, and celebrated the victories.

It was my day-to-day life experience that changed. Her death

changed me. I had an intimate knowledge of life and death. I was not

naïve to death; over the years I had had the privilege of providing support

and presence to dear friends who had died. I knew what death could look

like and what it felt like. Yet, my sister's death was different. I sat with

her after everyone else had left the hospital. It was quiet in the room; the

only sound I could hear was my own breathing. I stayed because I did not

want her to be alone. I had decided to wait until the nursing staff moved

her to the morgue. I remember how difficult it was to leave her and walk out of the hospital.

My journey with Annette did not end with my walk out of the hospital. Annette's death and my grief in the wake of her absence from my life changed my life experience. It is in both the subtle things and the obvious. I cannot telephone her; I cannot plan a trip or a family party with her. Her death brought a complex and unexpected change. I know that the death of my sister had a profound impact on my life. I also know that I have never stopped missing her presence. Or perhaps it is that I am acutely aware of her absence from both of our lives.

This inquiry holds something that I know about. I have lived the journey, and I have reflected on my personal experience. I wonder how the death of a sibling impacts the life stories of other surviving siblings.

In my work as a clinician, I have wondered if older sibling grief is not written about because the perceived needs of bereaved spouses, children, or elderly parents overshadow these relationships. Or is it perhaps that the sibling relationships of friends and colleagues are generally unknown? In this inquiry, I sought to open up the conversations and stories told by older bereaved sisters and brothers.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the first section of this chapter, I briefly discuss the questions that provided parameters to this inquiry. The following two sections are specific to the definitions of siblings and age as identified in the main query. In the next section, I explain my perspective on grief as a story, which is followed with a description of the inquiry process. In the subsequent section, I discuss the philosophical foundations of social constructionism that impact the creation of this inquiry. The last section details the organization of the remaining chapters in this thesis.

Questions Guiding the Inquiry

My purpose in this qualitative inquiry was to explore the known and, perhaps, the unknown stories of grief from the relational perspective of siblings. In this project, I specifically highlight the narratives of older individuals who have experienced the death of a sibling. I chose to articulate the emergent question as, "What is the lived experience of individuals, 60 years and older, who have had a sibling(s) die in recent years?"

Establishing the Sibling System

For this inquiry, sibling is defined as two or more persons who through a biological relationship, adoption, foster, or emotional system

identify as sisters and brothers. Genetic siblings are those siblings that are

conceived through one or both originating parents. There are other

kinship relations that are sometimes defined as belonging to a sibling

system. Sigmund Freud and his eldest nephew were raised as siblings in

the same household for several years. In later communications, Freud

shared the importance of this relationship by defining it as a sibling

relationship (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Shellenberger, 1999, p. 173).

Emotional siblings are those who have chosen to define

themselves as siblings and who may not have shared genetic parentage.

These sibling bonds may originate from second marriages, specifically

where there are adult children who are too old be adopted or be raised as

stepsiblings. People who once considered themselves strangers may

create a shared sense of connection and identify themselves as sisters and

brothers. This may be the case in the relationship of best friends. A

second example is found in the military, where the metaphor of being a

family is initiated to create an increased sense of cohesion as a unit.

In this inquiry, all the participants identified as kin from the same

family of origin.

Creating a Discrete Number on Age for the Inquiry

I searched the literature for information that was specific to the idea of age and to locate a discrete number assigned to the idea of older sibling. According to Sowers and Rowe (2007), the construct of aging consists of a two-part definition. The first level is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as aging is categorized as being the "advancement through the biological, psychological and social structure of individuals" (Sowers & Rowe, 2007, p. 3). The second level is taken from the United Nations, which categorized the concept of elderly as consisting of "persons 60 years and over are considered as elderly" (Sowers & Rowe, 2007, p. 3). There is no agreement as to what truly constitutes a definition of senior or elder based on a worldview. For this inquiry, I chose to utilize the construct identified by Sowers and Rowe with the discrete category of 60 years or older. This provides a discrete number as an entry point in which to explore the literature for knowledge on bereaved siblings specific to the parameters of my inquiry.

Attending to Grief as a Story

Grief is a word in the English language that holds power and authority with its experience. In Merriam-Webster, grief is first defined as "deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement"

("Grief," n.d.). An additional definition is provided and it states, "an

unfortunate outcome" ("Grief," n.d.). I include these definitions from a

dictionary as it is a common and generally useful reference in which to

increase one's knowledge. From this generalized definition, grief then

belongs in the realm of experience that is considered as "distress" or as

an unsuccessful, perhaps unhappy result. Yet in the world of everyday

conversations, the term grief is used in identifying the death of a

significant person in someone's life. In using the word grief, there is an

inherent acknowledgment of a changed relationship.

How is it determined when grief is identified as grief? Does it

disappear when one who is bereaved shares a story with humour or

smiles with memory? Is grief a current in the moment experience of the

senses, emotion, or logic? As a clinician, I have used the term grief work

as a noun that constitutes therapeutic work. Yet when I scrutinize it at

many levels, I begin to wonder how did this word come to have such

power and authority? Grief work is not a professional field such as

medicine or psychology, marital and family therapy, counselling, or

nursing. It is not an academic discipline that produces physicians,

psychologists, family therapists, nurses, or counsellors. As the literature

review in the next chapter attests, it is by utilizing the word grief that

numerous writings and studies began to appear. The death of one is the

beginning of a grief story for another.

There are several ideas as to what constitutes grief. The actual

experience of grief has been identified as a function of bereavement. The

status of bereavement moves into an experience of grieving as action that

originated from being bereaved (Attig, 2001). A differing explanation for

the occurrence of grief is that it transpires because of the love for another

(Parkes, 2011). There appears to be generalized confusion in the equating

of grief as a consequent of love. Love does not have to exist as a dynamic

in a relationship to experience grief. I would suggest that grief is a

complication of changed relationship.

In my experience as a clinician, bereaved sibling, and inquirer, I

have come to understand that grief is a word that holds experience,

feelings, connection, stories, and meanings. I believe one of the aspects

of grief is that it holds the story of relationship.

The Unfolding Inquiry

I explore the stories of the bereaved siblings from the perspective

of narrative inquiry. The reader is encouraged to be aware that no story is

ever finished; rather it has elements of previous stories as well as

portends stories into multiple possibilities and moves into the future

(Clandinin, 2013; Frank, 2010).

The focus of how story functions in social life becomes more

apparent when using the orientation of dialogical narrative analysis

(Frank, 2005, 2010, 2012). In this case, dialogical refers to the minimum

requirement of involvement being the story and storyteller. The addition

of a listener provides a channel for the movement of story. At a more

sophisticated level the implication of others being involved in story also

reaches to the outer edge of others not present but who have influential

association for the story (Frank, 2005, 2010, 2012).

The questions asked and explored are specific to each story and

each inquirer therefore opening multiple possibilities. The phenomena

that I was curious about in this inquiry was, "What aspects of the lived

experience for bereaved siblings does the story of grief illuminate?

Where does grief show up?" My intent in this inquiry was to seek out the

story of grief as told by a bereaved sibling.

Social Constructionism

The philosophical foundation of this inquiry originates from my

epistemological pondering of what can be known about what exists (S.

McNamee, personal communication, April 10, 2014). What can be

known about grief from a sibling viewpoint? One of the cornerstones in

this inquiry is reflective of my belief that the human world is

interconnected. My family of origin was social and involved with a larger

extended network of kin. My academic journey has taken me through

sociology, psychology, anthropology, Native American studies, as well

as marital and family therapy. My professional careers have always been

based in a defined sector that provides service to people.

       The idea of social constructionism calls forth the initial

foundation of connectives in building shared relationships that become

the conduit of the collaborative creation of knowledge (Gergen &

Gergen, 2008; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). In this inquiry, I specifically

focused on the foundational essence or the what in a sibling story that

may illuminate experienced life. It is the relational process that becomes

a key influencer in shared knowledge. The main purveyor of knowledge

is through communication such as language vis a vis relational processes.

A primary influence of social constructionism is the capacity to

encourage and acknowledge that multiple realities can co-exist (Gergen

& Gergen 2008). The underlying stance of plurality creates infinite

possibilities. Social constructionism is not an orientation that disputes the

accumulation of fact in knowledge; rather it is an orientation that asks for

more. Social constructionism seeks to enlarge knowledge and

possibilities.

Social construction is more than narrative as it involves many

levels of connection. I identified three levels of connection in this

investigation. None of these connections is placed in superiority over

another. One level is found in the connection of sibling with sibling. A

second connection is the surviving sibling with inquirer while the third

connection is the reader and the inquirer. The processes involved in these

connections are dynamic rather than static.

In this investigation, my focus was on grief as a relational process

that is experienced in everyday life. I recognize the knowledge of my

conversational partners and their lived stories, my involvement as the

inquirer and author, as well as the involvement of the reader. My

involvement with the stories shared by my conversational partners

generates a meta narrative of sibling grief. Each of us will bring our own

constructs into play as we ponder the shared material and knowledge in

this inquiry.

As an inquirer, I use the word grief to identify what experience I

am seeking from others. In this inquiry, I sought to know what others

have experienced in their lives as a result of having grieved a sibling.

As a clinician, I use the word grief to name an experience in the therapy room. Grief transmutes to grieving, which begins to identify activities, behaviours, affect, and thought processes that are shared in a story or in an unspoken and visible presence.

As a bereaved sibling, I use the word grief to describe my lived story of the aftertime when my sister went missing physically from my life. I call it my grief.

In everyday conversation with others, I am acutely aware that when I use the word grief in a sentence others join me in conversation. It is a word that holds many meanings as it is noticed and becomes a bridge to shared conversation. In this inquiry meaning is something that echoes in the narrative links involved in the process of a story. It impacts the storyteller and the listener (Frank, 2010, p. 92). Grief when it is storied can swiftly become another story when it is shared and others participate in conversation. Grief becomes a word that invites the story of relational process. It is one word with multiple relational possibilities.

Organizing the Inquiry

I have organized this dissertation into five chapters. In the prologue, I shared my experiences as both a bereaved sibling and a clinician to bring the reader into this dissertation. I have closed my

dissertation by ending with an epilogue that focused on my reflections from the experience of creating and participating in a formalized inquiry.

In between are five major chapters devoted to the backstory containing essential information and shared learnings that make up the body of this inquiry. As the author of this dissertation, my intent was to provide transparency on each aspect of this project from the beginning to the end.

In Chapter 1, I covered the reason for the inquiry, the purpose of the inquiry, who is defined as sibling, a definition of grief, and my orientation as the author of the inquiry.

In Chapter 2, I include a focused exploration of available theory and research specific to bereavement and grief. In the creation of this chapter, I reviewed extensive material in the field of thanatology, marital and family therapy, psychology, social work, education, nursing, and gerontology. The stories told by the participants further guided my search for additional literature. I first identify the evolution of dominant grief discourse through the centuries. I follow this with an overview of research that was applicable to the grief experience in the sibling relationship.

In Chapter 3, I describe the details involved in the approach of this inquiry. The information contained provides the reader with the opportunity to scrutinize the philosophy, rationale, and orientation of the detail needed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the inquiry progressed. I discuss the details of narrative inquiry that provided me with a method of seeking stories and of interpreting the received stories from participants.

In Chapter 4, I summarize the shared stories told to me by the bereaved siblings who participated in the inquiry as conversational partners. This chapter consists of the retold stories about each sibling relationship. It is systematized by themes, which are accompanied by excerpts from the transcribed conversations, information from my field journal, as well as relevant literature that functioned as a resource for me in my position of inquirer. There are six stories told in Chapter 4: five from the conversational partners over the age of 60 followed by my own story.

In Chapter 5, I synthesize the knowledge that I gathered in this inquiry. The final presentation of the results is a story of themes that are woven through the shared stories. First, I overview the entire project to create a comprehensive basis in which to share my discussion. I follow

this with a conversation that contains the elements that captured my

attention during the ongoing process of my involvement in this inquiry.

My focus in Chapter 5 is on the four main discoveries that emerged from

this inquiry. I conclude Chapter 5 with recommendations for further

targeted research and clinical considerations. I follow Chapter 5 with an

epilogue that contains my personal reflections.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This is an exploration of literature that is specific to the domain of grief and bereavement. It brings to the forefront how language, transmission of language, and the power of interpretation influence human process and understandings. In this chapter, I will focus on the writings of grief and bereavement, followed by an overview of research specific to the sibling system and siblings' experiences of grief. I chose investigators whose contributions have been acknowledged in the field of grief and bereavement.

In the first section of the chapter, my intention is to orient the reader in considering where and how current conversation about grief has its origins of several hundred years. The second purpose of this ancestral lineage is to share the milieu that has influenced my professional role. In the early publications of this review, I noticed that the terms around melancholia, sorrow, and grief were being used simultaneously and often interchangeably. My purpose in tracing the use of language as a description and transmitter of knowledge was to provide a historical context around the contemporary language of melancholy, sorrow, grief, and bereavement.

I identified the leading influencers in the context of defining melancholia, bereavement, and grief. I began with a published work that was authored by a physician Burton (1638/2004) who wrote from an artistic style to share his knowledge of sorrow and grief. I ended this section with the more current work of family therapist J. W. Nadeau (2006).

In the early exploration of mourning and bereavement, an emphasis was placed on predictable order with emotions being described as a rational experience. My intent is not to debate the dynamics of this thought process; rather, it is to acknowledge that it existed and did influence the evolution of research, description, and experiences of trained professionals to the extent that the lived human experience was not highlighted until the 21st century. There is no doubt that the lived experience of grief existed, hiding behind the doors of human life in the previous centuries.

Specific to the context of my inquiry, I searched and reviewed a variety of literature sources for inclusion. I spent time exploring electronic databases found in university libraries. I perused published textbooks, professional journals, peer reviewed journals, and articles. I accessed information from multidisciplinary fields, including family

therapy, thanatology, psychology, sociology, nursing, education,

gerontology, and palliative medicine. In addition to the search for

appropriate literature, I attended numerous workshops and conferences

that focused on bereavement, grief, and death. I also spoke with

researchers, published authors, and clinicians in the field.

The Evolution of Grief as a Contemporary Concept

There are aspects of the historical discourse of grief and

bereavement that continue as influences in the mental health field, mass

media, everyday conversation, individual understandings, and family

stories. In this section, I provide an overview into the evolution of the

literature available that was written and published from the early 17th

century to the present.

I found that the lineage of contemporary grief theory emerged

from the earlier writings of professionals who had undertaken the task of

exploring melancholia, sorrow, and grief from a variety of orientations.

This is not an exhaustive exploration of the literature specific to

contemporary grief constructions; it does, however, provide an

understanding of the building blocks and challenges for the professional

and the nonprofessional interested in bereavement. In the following

pages, I have identified individuals who have influenced the discourse related to the field of grief and bereavement.

Most of the early influencers were trained in the medical field as physicians and then psychiatrists, as the discipline of psychiatry began to emerge, followed by the disciplines of psychology and sociology. Early writings utilized observation as the basis for the interpretation of human response and behaviour. There is a strong historical evolution found in the next section that begins with melancholia appearing synonymously as the basis for the contemporary concept of grief.

Descriptions of melancholy, sorrow, mourning, and grief. In 1638, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, *with all the kinds, causes, symptoms, prognostics, and several cures of it*, was written by Robert Burton under the pseudonym of Democritus Junior. It was published posthumously and is the first published writing on the topic of modern day grief (Granek, 2010).

The content and format of *Anatomy of Melancholy* (Burton, 1638/2004) was deliberately written as a performative piece of literature to convey the intensity of life situations in which melancholy was experienced. This work was written initially as prose and has been used as a textbook by other investigators. The verses in this volume identified

a variety of difficult life situations, such as wars, plagues, famines,

murders, as well as the personal experiences of individuals and families.

The refrains were consistent in describing the emotional experience of

melancholy. Melancholy was described as "mad, sweet, sour, dam' d, and

fierce" (Burton, 1638/2004, para. 44). Burton was the first writer to

associate melancholy with sorrow when he proposed that the basis of the

definition of melancholy originated from an experience of sorrow.

Burton has been compared to other prominent British authors

such as Milton, Keats, and Thackeray ("Burton, Robert," 1955). Relevant

to his capacity to share his thoughts with the written word is the fact that

Burton occupied high-level positions as a clergyman and was the vicar of

the prestigious Christ Church in Oxford. In these positions, it can be

assumed that Burton had far reaching influence on his congregates as an

educated and spiritual leader.

The next published piece on the topic of mourning was written in

the late 1700s by a founding member of the United States of America and

physician, Dr. Benjamin Rush. Rush has been credited with cataloguing

physical symptoms of grief. His work was significant in moving the idea

of mourning into the field of medicine as well as into the language of

psychiatry. Rush described both somatic and emotive indicators, which

ranged from lack of cognitive retention to "sighing," "aphasia," "fever,"

and "development of gray hair" (Granek, 2010, p. 50). Rush was among

the first professionals to document prescribing medication for intense

grief as he prescribed opium for his patients (Parkes, 1978.)

With the 1812 publication of *Medical Inquiries and Observations*

Upon the Diseases of the Mind (Parkes, 1978), Rush became known as

the founder of psychiatry in the United States of America. Rush had both

large and distinguished audiences with whom he taught and shared his

observations and ideas, which lead to an establishment of influence and

language in furthering the idea of grief as illness.

Next in the historical lineage on grief and bereavement is the

research of Charles Darwin. Darwin (1899) wrote extensively about his

observations of the explicit physical expressions of grief in *The*

Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals. As a naturalist, Darwin

paid attention to the physical characteristics of sentient beings, as well as

the setting in which these expressions occurred. Darwin was among the

first to provide a detailed written account of the physical expression of

grief as an emotion. Darwin noted a significant difference between the

expression of melancholia and the expression of grief. In his research,

Darwin identified that there was a specific physical expression of "grief-

muscles" (Darwin, 1899, para. 703), which occurred in the facial

muscles. The appearance of the grief muscles was described as fleeting

and therefore not always easily observed. The grief muscles that Darwin

referred to were described as "the obliquity of the eyebrows [in

conjunction with a] peculiar furrow on the forehead [and combined with

the] depression of the corners of the mouth" (1899, para. 703).

In 2009, the *British Journal of Psychiatry* dedicated an edition to

"Darwin's contribution to psychiatry." In the editorial, Edward Shorter

suggested that in his opinion, Darwin's greatest contribution to the field

of psychiatry was the extensive work in the *Expression of Emotions in

Man and Animals*. As an exemplar of this contribution, Shorter identified

Darwin's research on the physical appearance of the grief muscles and

described how this unique facial expression has become known as the

omega sign. The omega sign is translated as the physical expression of

melancholia. The observations that Darwin explored have had a lasting

impact on the contemporary understandings of grief.

Descriptions began to change with the 1914 publication of *The

Foundations of Character; Being a Study of the Tendencies of the

Emotions and Sentiments* written by social psychologist Alexander

Shand. According to Shand, the array of human emotion was not

distinguishable as isolated phenomena as emotions were considered to be intermingled. To fully comprehend emotion, Shand believed it was essential to engage in a study of the individual's previous inclinations prior to an exploration of character. Shand emphasized the necessity to research "how the parts work" (1914, p. 2) as an understanding to clarify the whole emotion. Shand identified the relevance of including psychosocial aspects of emotion and enlarged the human experience of emotion.

Shand (1914) was among the first to clarify that sorrow was dependent on both the developmental stage of the individual and the individual personality characteristics. Shand believed that as an emotion sorrow was among the most difficult to identify correctly. In contrast to sorrow, Shand suggested that melancholy might have elements of delusion, hallucination, and a lack of control in its expression. Melancholy was identified as distinct from sorrow in that it had a base component of grief; however, the larger foremost features according to Shand were "fear, suspicions and discontent" (Shand, 1914, p. 305).

There is work in gaining resolution of grief. This section identifies the shift from defining grief to processes designed to find resolution of the experience of grief. I begin with the famous case study

of Anna O. I have included Dr. Breuer in this section for two reasons;

first, due to the bereavement work he accomplished with patient Anna O.

and, second, to identify the influence that Breuer and this patient had on

the young Sigmund Freud.

      In 1880, Dr. Josef Breuer, a prominent physician and

neurophysiologist, attended to a 21-year-old patient who began to exhibit

a variety of emotional and somatic symptoms (Launer, 2005). What was

extraordinary about this physician–patient relationship was that it was

among the first to be written up as a case study. Sigmund Freud was the

initiator of bringing this case study to the attention of professional peers.

Breuer had hired Freud to work in his laboratory and became not only the

employer but also a mentor to the young Freud (Launer, 2005).

      The pseudonym for Breuer's patient in this case study was Anna

O (Launer, 2005). The presentation of symptoms for Anna began when

her father became ill and subsequently died. The background of Anna

O's experience (Launer, 2005) was directly related to her significant grief

experience after the death of her father. The second point about this case

study that has implications for this section is that Freud was working as a

laboratory assistant for Breuer. Freud was interested in the description of

this specific patient, her presenting symptoms, and the technique that

Breuer was employing in his treatment. Breuer referred to his technique

as the cathartic method, while Anna called it the "talking cure" (Launer,

2005, p. 465). Anna and her treatment by Breuer had a substantial impact

on Freud in his understanding of how the death of a loved one would

relate to grievous behaviour (Launer, 2005).

In the mid-1900s, Freud wrote extensively about *Mourning and*

Melancholia (Freud, 1917). Freud defined mourning as having two

causations: "loss of a loved one [and] the loss of some abstraction which

has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal and so

on" (1917 p. 243). The word loss reflects the psychodynamic orientation

to which Freud adhered. The word death was not used in this description

of mourning; rather he stated that mourning was a response to "the loss of

a loved person" (Freud, 1917, p. 243).

In the beginning paragraphs of *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud

(1917) acknowledged the importance of the individual who was in

mourning. Freud (1917) went on to clarify that

 although mourning involves grave departures from the normal

 attitude to life, it never occurs to us to regard it as a pathological

 condition and to refer it to medical treatment. We rely on its being

overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any

interference with it as useless or even harmful. (p. 243)

In direct contradiction to this depiction of nonengagement in an

intervention, Freud (1917) began to explain the necessity of reality

testing for the bereaved which would provide a method of relinquishing

attachment to the "love object" (Freud, 1917, p. 250). The love object is a

direct reference to a person who had died.

Freud (1917) argued that it was only when "the work of mourning

[was finished that] 'the ego'" (p. 245) would be free and not repressed.

The phrase "the work of mourning" gained rapid prominence in the

research and theories postulated by others who came after Freud. Two

distinctions occurred as direct result of this phrase: first that mourning

had not been identified as either an emotion or an experience and second

the idea of work or labour that one had to toil through to gain resolution

from mourning. The capacity to relinquish the relationship to the

individual who had died became an integral concept in the work of grief

(Freud, 1917).

Melanie Klein (1940/1994) was directly influenced by Freud as

evidenced by her popular article on "Mourning and its Relation to Manic-

Depressive States." Klein introduced her article by acknowledging

Freud's (1917) composition that stated the work of mourning could only

be completed once the mourner could release connection to the one who

died. Klein presented the argument that adult mourning was a direct

response to the earlier experience of separation from mother. She stated

that

> in normal mourning, early psychotic anxieties are reactivated; the
>
> mourner is in fact ill, but, because this state of mind is so common
>
> and seems so natural to us, we do not call mourning an illness
>
> (Klein, 1940/1994, p. 104).

There are numerous critiques from postmodern authors who

refute Freud's (1917) argument that one must release attachment to a

significant person who has died. Contrary to the idea of relinquishing is

the current concept that incorporates and encourages the idea of

continuation with the dead (Silverman & Nickman, 1996; Stroebe,

Gergen, Gergen, & Stroebe, 1997).

In 1944, Erich Lindemann wrote "Symptomology and

Management of Acute Grief," which was published in the *American*

Journal of Psychiatry. This paper is among the first research projects to

specifically focus on grief. His project included 101 bereaved

participants, which included both hospitalized patients and nonpatients.

Lindemann described the participants as coming from four distinct contexts of grief: "psychoneurotic patients," "relatives of patients," "bereaved disaster victims of the Cocoanut Grove fire," and "relatives of members of the armed forces" (1944, p. 187). Given the violent situations that involved the death of a loved one, there was a high probability that some of the participants might have experienced trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder in addition to the death of someone they cared about.

Lindemann (1944) identified symptoms of "normal grief" (p. 187), which included sighing, overall fatigue, gastrointestinal complaints, preoccupation with the deceased, guilt, and change in normal conduct. He emphasized the importance of the professional relationship in providing support to the bereaved. Lindemann has taken on the idea of work and specifically targeted the construct of grief work. To accomplish the work in gaining successful resolution of grief, he identified three tasks that needed to be accomplished: "emancipation from the bondage to the deceased [,] readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing [, and] the formation of new relationships" (Lindemann, 1944, p. 190). Lindemann followed the line of thinking that originated with Freud (1917) by continuing to identify the need to relinquish the person who

had died. He went a step further by offering the two additional processes

of readjustment and creating new relationships.

Grief exists because of attachment. The concept of attachment

emerged from the work of John Bowlby (Bretherton, 1992). Initially,

Bowlby had been hired by the World Health Organization (WHO) after

World War II to work with children who had been orphaned during the

war (Bretherton, 1992; Parkes, 1972, 2016; Silverman & Klass, 1996).

According to Bowlby, family patterns of interaction were significant to

members in a family system. His identification regarding the

psychosocial significance of family patterns was in direct contrast to the

popular theory of psychoanalysis. Bowlby moved away from

psychoanalysis and expanded on the concept of intergenerational

transmission among family relations. Bowlby identified that "grief and

mourning processes in children and adults appear whenever attachment

behaviours are activated but the attachment figure continues to be

unavailable" (Bretherton, 1992, p. 769).

During his time at the Tavistock Institute, Bowlby worked with

several colleagues who included Mary Ainsworth (noted for her work of

attachment patterns with infants), James Robertson, and Colin Murray

Parkes (Bowlby, 1980; Bretherton, 1992; Parkes, 2016). Over the years,

this group researched, developed, and expanded the concept of

attachment theory. Robertson and Bowlby published a paper that

described three distinct phases that occurred as a response to separation.

The three phases were conceptualized as "protest," which involved a

sense of anxiety, "despair," which was identified as grief and mourning,

and "denial and detachment" (Bretherton, 1992, p. 769).

  In 1980, the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations published the

large volume of work that Bowlby had authored on attachment theory.

The significance of this publication was that Bowlby expanded on his

earlier research by detailing the idea of attachment as a process that

responded to the changes in a relationship such as death that resulted in

emotional, physical, and psychological experiences which became

identified as grief (Bowlby, 1980; Bretherton, 1992; Kosminsky &

Jordan, 2016; Parkes, 1978, 2016).

  In the early 1960s, a young psychiatrist Colin Murray Parkes

joined Bowlby at the Tavistock Institute to continue his research of adult

grief responses (Bretherton, 1992; Parkes, 1978, 2016). This empirical

research involved the study of widows in their own personal

environment. Parkes (1978) reported that among his findings was a

preoccupation with thoughts of the deceased and that the preoccupation

resulted from the continual attempts to explain the loss and the continual

rumination over the loss experience.

In 1970, Bowlby and Parkes coauthored a paper in which they

discussed and developed four sequential phases that occurred during

mourning (Bretherton, 1992; Parkes, 1978, 2016). The first phase

identified in adult grief suggested that there was shock and numbness.

During this phase, the death was considered not real; this experience was

frequently accompanied by experiences of physical distress. Parkes

(2016) noted that emotionally the griever must move through this phase

or potentially be at risk for becoming emotionally numb. The second

phase was identified as filled with yearning and protest. The concept of

yearning and protest was related to the idea of separation anxiety. The

markers of this phase were the preoccupation with the deceased person.

The third phase was one of disorganization and despair, which was

marked by a sense of hopelessness and withdrawal from the social

environment. The fourth phase involved a sense of reorganization. This

was the phase where life became restored, as the griever gradually

became more involved in everyday life (Bretherton, 1992; Parkes, 1978;

P. Wright, & Hogan, 2008).

In his 1978 book, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*,
Parkes continued to argue that grief was a physical illness and that as an
experience it also brought forth human maturity. Parkes stated, "I know
of only one functional psychiatric disorder whose cause is known, whose
features are distinctive, and that is grief, the reaction to loss" (1978, p.
20).

Parkes (1978) made a salient point when he clarified that "the
pain of grief is just as much part of life as the joy of love; it is, perhaps,
the price we pay for love, the cost of commitment" (p. 20.) This
statement acknowledges the relational connection of grief. Parkes (1978)
went on to explain that he believed that "grief is a process and not a
state" (p. 21).

In his 1985 article, Parkes identified the idea that the experience
of grief became integrated into one's life knowledge. He explained this
concept by suggesting that "the bereaved do not forget the past; rather,
they gradually discover which assumptions continue to be relevant and
enriching in their new life situation and which have to be abandoned"
(1985, p. 12). Parkes (1985) identified several factors that were important
to take into consideration in supporting grievers. Among these factors

was the acknowledgment of the connection between the way a griever

mourns and the support of the social responses from others.

        In January 2016, Parkes presented a plenary lecture titled,

"Looking Back and Looking Forward" for the 2nd International

Conference on Loss, Bereavement and Human Resilience in Israel and

the World. Parkes (2016) spoke about the contemporary field of grief and

bereavement by identifying the timeline of his own education, research,

and experiences that have occurred since he began his professional

career. Parkes (2016) acknowledged the mentorship of Bowlby and the

work of his colleague Ainsworth as being formative in his own career.

An area that Parkes acknowledged was the criticism of their early

research. During the plenary, Parkes stated, "The stories they [research

participants] told helped us work out the patterns, the early patterns that

drew attention to bereavement" (C. Parkes, personal communication,

January 15, 2016). He continued by reflecting, "It wasn't great; it was a

start and we continued working" (C. Parkes, personal communication,

January 15, 2016).

        Regarding attachment theory, Parkes (2016) clarified what he

identified as being central to the criticism about attachment theory. He

stated that "psychological processes are different from each other but

work together" and "pangs of grief, the acute pain is a consequence of

biological attachment to the people we love" (C. Parkes, personal

communication, January 15, 2016). This statement embraces the central

idea of attachment theory in that emotional–psychological relationships

originate from the inherent biological processes of human development.

Critics of the connection between grief and bereavement and

attachment theory argue that it has become a dominant discourse that

embraces a singular explanation. This has served to create a polarized

perspective in which professionals are then forced to establish their work

on an either/or hypothesis (Klass, Silverman, & Nickman, 1996; Stroebe,

Schut, & Borner, 2010; Taylor, Clark, & Newton, 2008).

Processing a grief experience. An influencer on how the

Western world views grief and loss came from the research of Elisabeth

Kubler-Ross. The original Bowlby–Robertson research and identification

of their four phases of adult grief responses influenced the subsequent

stage theory identified by Kubler-Ross (Bretherton, 1992). Parkes had

met with Kubler-Ross prior to the release of her paper and shared the

research that Bowlby, Robertson, and he had been working on in the field

of grief (Bretherton, 1992; Parkes, 1985, 2016). The influence of these

three researchers was realized in the work of Kubler-Ross. In her

research, Kubler-Ross built on the concept of the four phases and created

five psychologically based stages in her popular book *On Death and*

Dying (1969). The five phases were denial, anger, bargaining, depression,

and acceptance.

Kubler-Ross did extraordinary research with people who were

dying. Her work was unique for the time and brought forward an

understanding of the experience of dying for people with a terminal

illness. Her results provided the opportunity to identify different types of

intervention with the terminally ill (K. Wright, 2003).

Attachment theory continues to prevail in the research of Dennis

Klass, Phyllis Silverman, and Steven Nickman (1996). The concept of

continuing bonds is an approach that encouraged an ongoing relationship

with the deceased. The term continuing bonds was a concept designed to

recognize and build on the idea that death does not necessarily end a

relationship. Continuing to maintain communication with the deceased is

encouraged. Activities might include speaking to the deceased out loud,

engaging in internal dialogue or visiting graves, welcoming visitations in

dreams, or setting a table place during an important meal. Continuing

bonds is a method of integrating both the life and the death of the

deceased into the experience of bereavement.

However, there are situations in which encouraging an ongoing bond with the deceased would not be appropriate. Examples are religious beliefs or cultural beliefs in which death is understood differently. The idea of continuing bonds is counterintuitive in traumatic or abusive experiences (Stroebe et al., 1996).

In 1996, Klass et al. invited a variety of researchers to share insights and conceptualizations about continuing bonds among different populations. The intent of this book was to open the dialogue about grief and contribute to new understandings (Klass et al., 1996). The primary goal for these editors was to support a knowledge base that would provide a constructed understanding and basis to formulate grief theory to move past the dominant ideas perpetuated by Freud's (1917) work on mourning. Klass et al. laid out the history and contributed to this goal by examining the personal life and grief experiences that occurred during Freud's lifetime. They began with a statement that provided the historical acknowledgment of how Freud's ideas became dominant in the domain of grief. They identified the incongruence between how Freud conveyed his theory of psychoanalysis on the life of others and yet had deeply painful life experiences himself. Klass et al. referenced the personal communications and letters that Freud had written after his 4-year-old

grandson had died and again after his daughter, Sophie, died. In Freud's

bereavement experience, there seemed to be a disconnection between the

application of the rational theory of object relations and his own painful

human experience of grieving the death of loved ones (Carter &

McGoldrick, 1988; Klass et al., 1996).

In his edited book on *Disenfranchised Grief, New Directions,*

Challenges and Strategies for Practice, Doka (2002) sought to enrich the

concept of disenfranchised grief, which is an unacknowledged grief and

or an unacknowledged relationship where a death has occurred. The

underlying premise of this theory is that kinship systems and cultural

systems have specific norms and rules that define role and position in the

system. According to Doka, there are three social categories in which

disenfranchised grief may occur.

The first category of disenfranchised grief occurs when the

connection of the deceased and the griever is not recognized (Doka,

2002). In this category, the relational aspects of the griever and the

deceased are not given acknowledgment due to some aspect of the

relationship, or the relationship itself is invisible to others, or the

relationship is discounted. These relationships may include ex partners,

coworkers, college roommates, nursing home roommates, clients, or

family systems deemed outside of "cultural norm" (Doka, 2002, p. 10),
such as same-sex parented families, foster families, adoptive, or step
families.

The second category of disenfranchised grief occurs when there is
no recognition of the loss (Doka, 2002). This category refers to
relationships that are not being acknowledged because the loss itself is
not given the status of recognition by the social context of others.
Common examples of this category are loved ones who are dementing
and experiencing a significant change in personality. This is attributed to
the fact that biologically the person is alive, albeit in a forever changed
state. The status of terminal illness is another difficult and often
unacknowledged loss for the well partners, family members, and friends.
Abortion is a difficult state of loss, and given the rigidity of some belief
systems, the survivors are not always given permission to grieve and may
be socially shunned. In addition to the relational aspect of this category,
there may be a sense of loss in life transitions, such as aging, and changes
in social status, to name two examples (Doka, 2002).

A third category of disenfranchised grief occurs when there is an
omission of acknowledgement from others (Doka, 2002). For example,
the elderly, the young, or the developmentally challenged are not

accorded an identity of griever due to the beliefs that they are either not

capable of feeling grief or that they cannot recognize death (Doka, 2002).

The concern for disenfranchised grievers is that there is no

societal permission or support to grieve. The resulting emotional and

cognitive responses have a higher probability of becoming intensified or

complicated. A major criticism of disenfranchised grief is that there is

limited empirical evidence or scientific validity of the concept, although

disenfranchised grief has been accepted in the field of thanatology and

utilized in grief counselling (Thornton & Zanich, 2002).

The pursuit for meaning during grief work. The idea that

reconceptualizing the importance of meaning for the bereaved person has

continued to gain prominence in contemporary understanding of grief

work. Meaning reconstruction is a concept that has been popularized and

deepened by Neimeyer (2002, 2016). The underlying premise of his

concept is based on an understanding of constructivist theory that

supports and works with life narratives. The goal of meaning making

reconstruction is to support the changed narrative that has been impacted

through a death. Death and the ensuing grief experience cause a deep

personal change and dislocation in meaning for the one who is grieving.

This is accomplished by acknowledging previously understood meaning

and supporting the griever to create a narrative that resonates for the individual. The underlying premise of cognitive constructivism is to support sense making, benefit finding, and creating a narrative (Neimeyer, 2016).

Neimeyer (2013) identified five characteristics involved in meaning making that are integral to the incorporation of the grieving experience. The first one acknowledges the reality of death; the second is being able to access emotions; the third aspect involves the revision of the deceased and their mental representations; while the fourth element is to create a coherent narrative of the loss; and the final one is to redefine life goals that match the changed meaning.

Meaning making was explored by Nadeau (2001) as a central grieving concept from a family systems perspective. Nadeau (2002) identified that family systems create their own systemic meanings around the grief experienced upon the death of a family member. Nadeau (2001, 2002) focused her research and work as a clinician on the interrelationships between family members, the structure of the family system, and how as a system they create meaning. Meaning creation in a family system was defined as "their cognitive representations of reality" (Nadeau, 2001, p. 96).

The narratives created by families are a collaborative process embedded with meaning. Nadeau (2002) identified symbolic interaction as the basis to the dynamics of meaning creation. Nadeau (2006) described the use of metaphors that provided a facilitative bridge on which to build discussion about grief. Nadeau (2001, 2006) maintained that the use of metaphors provided a language for the creation of a different experience and a different experience of life reality (Nadeau, 2006). The purpose of engaging families was to support the entire system as they worked through a death and subsequent grieving experience.

Grief in Sibling Relations

In this section of the literature review, I focus on the research that specifically incorporates siblings and the grief experience. As I explored the research, I did become aware that the language and the conceptualizations are often based in the early work of many of the authors I identified in the first section of this chapter.

The adult sibling subsystem is the family system relationship that is noticed periodically as a second layer of family definitions. Bereaved adult siblings have written about their experiences; grieving siblings have identified being unacknowledged by others when a brother or sister died (Laverty, 2014; Marshall, 2009; Wray, 2003).

The role of sibling is a unique relationship in a family constellation. Sibling relationships may involve elements of friendship and function as a support role throughout the maturation process (VanVolkam, 2006). On the other perspective of the idea of sibling friendships are the less satisfactory family relations (Becvar, 1997). These dynamics may include competitive, abusive, or bullying sibling relations. A death in a family system does not always bring members emotionally closer, as difficult dynamics that were pre-existing can become accentuated with the tension of death and grieving (Breen & O'Connor, 2011).

Siblings know each other in ways that are different from parental relationships and spousal relationships. The death of a sibling creates an unfamiliar and complicated world of experience. It can create a sense of loss and order in the sibling relationship and in the lived experience of the surviving sibling in the world.

Existing research has focused on grief in the early years, adolescent, and young and middle adulthood years of a sibling system. As a background to my inquiry I explored the research that identified grief for siblings across the life span. I was seeking themes, factors, and influences that might be brought forward in the stories from my

conversational partners or in my analyses of the stories. I organized this section to begin with perinatal loss and conclude with identifying senior adult sibling inquiries.

Perinatal. Perinatal loss refers to the death of a baby immediately before actual birth or during the first couple of weeks after birth. Traditionally, the grief experience is identified as being in the parental system. The experience of existing siblings in this system or the siblings born after this death experience is an area of research that was recently investigated by O'Leary and Gaziano (2011). The research is based on eight case studies utilizing descriptive phenomenology that explored the in-depth experience of siblings who had attained adulthood (O'Leary & Gaziano, 2011). The eight adult siblings shared life experiences that identified varied responses. Among the responses were feelings of guilt in surviving, detaching emotionally from other siblings, and engaging in overprotection and hypervigilance in relationships. This group reported reoccurring nightmares, an incapacity to engage in emotionally satisfying relationships and emotional estrangement from parent figures. Each of them reported on early memories of interactions with parents and other siblings where they had to create or fill in the blanks of experience not understood. O'Leary and Gaziano's research confirmed that the

experience of perinatal grief affects children born before and after a

perinatal loss. A secondary loss for children born before the perinatal

death experience is that the grief experience dramatically changed and

influenced the parents in this system (O'Leary & Gaziano, 2011).

O'Leary and Gaziano's (2011) findings indicated that it is

important to provide adequate support to the family system in the

experience of this type of grief. Therapeutic support provided a

foundation to the grieving parental system. Early support for these

parents created an opportunity that allowed them to remain emotionally

and psychologically available to the siblings already in the family, as

well as for the children born to them after the perinatal death.

Childhood and adolescence. There are studies that have

focussed on sibling death and bereavement experience in the category of

childhood and adolescence (Davies, 1993; McGowan & Davies, 1997;

Hogan & DeSantis, 1996; Marshall & Davies, 2011; Packman et al.,

2006).

Davies (1993) utilized grounded theory in her research with

children and adolescences. Participants were recruited from families who

had a child die from cancer. In the first study, children who ranged from

6 to 16 years were interviewed 3 years after the death of a sister or

brother. The second research project involved the same family systems and included all the surviving siblings in the system. The siblings who participated in the third research project came from 58 family systems and were 7 to 9 years away from the death of their sibling. Davies found that there were extended responses to bereavement experience. Among the noted outcomes was the identification that the actual death of a sister or brother was experienced as "unexpected" (Davies, 1993, p. 108) even with a terminal diagnosis. The bereaved sibling identified "loneliness and sadness" (Davies, 2003, p. 109) as a dominant emotional experience. In addition, Davies found that siblings found comfort in creating an ongoing relationship with their deceased sister or brother.

Adolescence is a time of growth and development that is fraught with tension and transition. Peer group acceptance is often at the forefront of creating a sense of identity for this time of life. Sibling relationships are in a variety of roles and functions, including the role of mentor, friend, mirror, supporter, confidante, and tormentor. The death of a sibling at this time in life has numerous implications for the surviving sibling. This group of siblings may literally disappear in a grief experience by withdrawing into self, excluding adult caretakers, disappearing into a peer support system, or they may not be noticed due

to the overarching grief of a parental system. The death of a sibling

during adolescence creates a layered experience that involves the

relational loss of the sibling system. The interpersonal dynamics between

siblings is often one of knowing and exploring the emotional and

psychological self in relation to the world companioned by another. The

surviving sibling must now make the development journey into

adulthood and the world without the presence of that known companion

(Deeter, 2013).

Several bereaved siblings who had the experience of a death early

in their adolescence recognized the impact on their individual

development with self-identified gravity and a preference for solitary

activity rather than connecting with peers. Having an early knowledge of

death and grief was identified as a positive experience at having a sense

of ease of familiarity with death and grief, which provided the capacity to

be with others in their grief experiences (Davies, 1993). An outcome

noted in the bereavement experience in the teenage years was the difficult

behaviours exhibited on both an intrapersonal and interpersonal basis

(Davies & McGowan, 1995).

Davies (1993) found several factors that were integral to the grief

response for children. The first was collective experiences of family

members, while a second factor involved the degree to which the system

functions as a closed or open system and how shared memories are

acknowledged in the family system. The emotional relationship between

the bereaved sibling and the sibling who died was a third factor that

became the predictor of the bereavement response. Davies found that the

surviving sibling's bereavement response depended on whether the

siblings' emotional relationship was experienced as positive or negative

(Davies, 1993; Marshall & Davies, 2011).

In the early 1990s, Hogan and DeSantis developed an adolescent

sibling bereavement theory (Hogan & DeSantis, 1996). The researchers

identified three major underlying dynamics that addressed the process of

grief from a sibling perspective. The first dynamic was identified as the

experience of grief, the second being attachment bonds with the dead

sibling, and the third dynamic being the developmental tensions of this

age group. This research involved 157 bereaved adolescents from across

the United States. The bereaved sibling participated in the Hogan Sibling

Inventory of Bereavement (HSIB) instrument, which was developed by

Hogan in 1990 (Hogan & DeSantis, 1996).

Hogan and DeSantis (1996) discussed the idea that the bereaved

sibling benefited by incorporating a changed sense of self and meaning

following the death of a sibling. The authors speculated that resolution of

this dilemma is required for the surviving sibling to be able to fully

incorporate the experience. Hogan and DeSantis's final recommendation

was a call for more research in adolescent bereavement to recognize and

deepen the clinician's understanding and enhance the clinician's capacity

to screen for critical dynamics that may impede the development and

growth of the adolescent self.

      Adult siblings. Most of the research on sibling bereavement has

focused on young children and adolescents, with limited research on

siblings who are adults. In the following section, I identify inquiries that

focus on the bereaved adult sibling.

      The closeness of the sibling relationship for bereaved adult

siblings indicated a significant correlation to the intensity of grief

responses (Robinson, 2001). In this study, there were 87 sibling

participants, aged 28 to 57 years. The cause of death was identified as

"acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)" specific (Robinson,

2001, p. 25). The range of time from the death of their sibling was 3

months to 11 years out from the death. The study was designed utilizing

Bowlby's identification of attachment theory. Robinson (2001) noted that

her study produced a finding similar to the findings that Davies described

in a 1988 study that involved grieving siblings aged six to 16 years.

Robinson found that the emotional closeness as an attachment indicator

of the siblings predicted the intensity of grief response experienced by a

bereaved sibling.

Charles and Charles utilized attachment theory in their 2006 study

that involved bereaved siblings. The inquiry utilized the four-category

attachment model to predict attachment style when there has been a

sibling loss. Data were collected via a self-report questionnaire. There

were 34 participants who were undergraduate students at the University

of Michigan with average age being 18 years.

Charles and Charles (2006) concluded that attachment style was

not an appropriate guide in understanding or identifying the needs of the

griever. They suggested that a different model that was more flexible in

character would be beneficial when exploring the psychosocial needs in a

life-long relationship such as that of siblings. The authors noted that

bereaved siblings who had maintained a relationship with their deceased

sibling had better interpersonal implications for positive future

relationships (Charles & Charles, 2006). Charles and Charles called for

an additional aspect of support in the recognition of the grief experience

for the parental system and how this would impact parents' roles in caring for their surviving children who were experiencing sibling grief.

A different qualitative research project that centred on sibling bereavement was conducted by Laverty (2014) as a part of her PhD requirements. In her narrative inquiry, Laverty focused on the lived experiences of grief with nine adult women. The major finding in this inquiry was that the element most central to the experiences of the bereaved siblings was that the death of their sibling created an ongoing void in the life of the surviving sibling (Laverty, 2014).

A personal experience of sibling grief had researcher Marshall (Marshall, 2009; Marshall & Davies, 2011) change the direction of her original academic study to focus instead on adult sibling grief. In this narrative research, Marshall (2009) explored her personal adult sibling grief experience alongside the grief stories of three other participants who were adult sibling grievers. Upon reflection of her younger brother's unexpected death, Marshall shared that the impact changed her known sense of self in life to a life that was now unfamiliar and unknown. Her description of the immediate timeframe after his death expressed a common experience found among sibling grievers at every stage of development: "There were no words to convey how dreadful the first few

months after Brent's death were. Everything in life lost its meaning. The

order, neatness and predictability was gone and I walked in a fog"

(Marshall, 2009, p. 5).

The role of the surviving adult siblings was characterized as being

action oriented to provide emotional, psychological, and physical

assistance to others, such as the widowed partner, grieving nieces and

nephews, and older parent systems (Marshall, 2009). A common theme

found among the siblings in this study was that each of them was

involved with complex issues such as attending medical appointments,

acting as confidantes, and providing a comforting presence to their dying

siblings (Marshall, 2009).

Another theme found in Marshall's narrative study was the

identification of the experience as disenfranchised grievers for the

surviving siblings (Marshall & Davies 2011). Marshall and Davies found

that there was a distinct separation from the telling of the self-grief

experience and of not being able to share openly with other family

members. Marshall and Davies identified this experience as one of

disenfranchisement due to the lack of recognition by others.

In the article coauthored by Marshall and Davies (2011), they

brought together their perspective research findings to explore sibling

experience across childhood and adulthood. In her original research,

Davis (1993) worked primarily with children and Marshall (2009)

focused on middle-aged adults. Utilizing the original grounded theory

constructs that Davis identified in her 1991/1999 research, Marshall and

Davies identified how grieving siblings share common experiences

regardless of age. The constructs were "I hurt inside," "I don't

understand," I do not belong," and "I am not enough" (Marshall &

Davies, 2011, p. 115). The authors suggested that the experience of grief

in sibling relationships of any age had identifiable elements. Among

those identified was the emotional experience of grief involving profound

sadness, anger, irritability, and frustration. Integral to the support need of

bereaved siblings, Marshall and Davies identified the necessity of

providing shared knowledge, creating a sense of belonging, and

encouraging the acceptance of emotion.

Siblings over the age of 60. Moss and Moss (1989) focused on

the meaning that provided significance in the sibling relationship. The

purpose of the research was to contribute to the knowledge about the

"normative loss" (Moss & Moss, 1989, p. 94) of siblings who were over

the age of 60 years. Participants in this qualitative research were

bereaved siblings who were 65 years old and older. There were 20

participants interviewed in this qualitative study. The average participant age was 75 years. The sibling death had occurred 1 to 25 years prior to the interview, with average experience being 5 years out from the death (Moss & Moss, 1989).

The researchers presented seven dimensions considered significant to their study of finding meaning: "patterns of interaction, instrumental and emotional support, positive affect, negative affect, social comparison (rivalry), socialization, and shared sense of family identity" (Moss & Moss, 1989, p. 97). Moss and Moss (1989) found several findings that were noteworthy. The bereaved siblings were deeply connected to the family of origin; they provided corroboration of each other's lives and history, and the death of the sibling created an experience of "a process" (Moss & Moss, 1989, p. 101) and not a one-time occurrence. The understanding that grief is a process refutes the earlier notions of the theorists such as Freud (1917), who hypothesized that one must release the connection before the griever can regain his or her own life.

A study that investigated the correlation between the death of a sibling, personal death anxiety, and depression in adults between the age of 65 and 97 years was conducted by Cicircelli (2009). This inquiry

included 150 participants—61 men and 89 women. Three measures were

used: the fear of death subscale, the Center for Epidemiological

Depression Scale, and an interview to explore sibling connections.

Statistical analysis was utilized to verify the data from the scales.

Cicircelli (2009) found that the susceptibility of death anxiety was related

to a personal "sense of vulnerability "(p. 30). Regarding depression,

Cicircelli found that the closeness of the sibling relationship mitigated

depressive symptomology.

A longitudinal study conducted through the Swiss

Interdisciplinary Longitudinal Study on the Oldest of Old (SWILSOO) at

the Centre for Gerontology in Switzerland provided the data to examine

the significance of bereavement on the health of elders (Lalive d'Epinay,

Cavalli, & Guillet, 2009). The study was conducted as a 10-year follow-

up and a 5-year follow-up with two cohorts. The first cohort consisted of

340 participants who were born between 1910 and 1914. There were 377

participants in the second cohort who were born between 1915 and 1919.

The researchers explored the impact of the death of a spouse, a child, a

sibling, or a close friend using three health dimensions: physical

ailments, functional health, and depressive symptoms. The participants

completed questionnaires (Lalive d'Epinay et al., 2009). An important

finding in this research project was that three out of four deaths

experienced were sibling deaths. Lalive d'Epinay et al. (2009) identified

that those who had experienced sibling bereavement reported on

experiencing a decline that was "mild and short term" (p. 302), whereas

the death of a close friend had significantly different and longer-term

impact and resulted more often in depressive symptomology. The authors

concluded that sibling bereavement and the death of close friends was

associated with the very old, while spousal death was associated as an

event that occurred younger. This larger and more significant impact of

bereavement in these relationships was explained as emanating from the

long-standing bonds of relationships created over time (Lalive d'Epinay

et al., 2009).

Although these may be considered as normal experiences, as one

ages Lalive d'Epinay et al. (2009) suggested that death is a significant

disruption in life-long relationships for the griever and the survivor. As

has been seen in numerous conclusions from previous research studies,

the closeness or affectional bonds experienced in the relationship were

indicated as a marker for the intensity of grief experienced. A significant

conclusion found in this research was that it was the perceived emotional

closeness in the relationship that had impact on the experience of the

griever (Lalive d'Epinay et al., 2009).

Grief experienced in a twin sibling relationship was the focus of a

content analysis that came out of exploring interview data collected for a

longitudinal study in Sweden (Rosendahl, Bulow, & Bjorklund, 2013).

This project was called Swedish Adoption Twin Study of Ageing

(SATSA). The identified interviews that were analyzed for this study

were a subset of the original 35 participants and consisted of seven

participants aged 75 to 91 years. In their preamble to the study,

Rosendahl et al. (2013) identified key concepts that underlined the

assumptions in the study. The first concept identified a definition of

bereavement that originally came from the 2002 paper written by Strobe,

Hansson, Strobe, and Schut. Bereavement is recognized "as the objective

situation of having lost a loved one and which is experienced within

emotional, physical, cognitive, behavioural, social and philosophical

dimensions" (Rosendahl et al., 2013, p. 64). The second idea was that the

authors clearly acknowledged that a common definition of grief focuses

on the negative emotions while neglecting the positive emotions—the

negative emotions of grief being "dejection, despair, anxiety, guilt, anger,

hostility and loneliness [combined with specific behaviours of] agitation,

fatigue, crying and social withdrawal" (Rosendahl et al., 2013, p. 64).

There was no definition as to what constituted positive emotion, other

than postulating that there may be an "adaptive function" (Rosendahl et

al., 2013, p. 65) in this emotional experience.

       Rosendahl et al.'s (2013) analysis focused on the idea of

attachment theory, which has been a common theme in the contemporary

research and inquiry field of adult sibling bereavement experience.

Attachment in a twin sibling relationship was identified as being

symmetric with each twin "giving and receiving on a more equal basis"

(Rosendahl et al., 2013, p. 65), which is contrasted to the parent–child

attachment where the parental role gives more to the child in the

relationship.

       Rosendahl et al.'s (2013) study found that a major difference in

co-twin grief experience was that the surviving twin was forced to

consider identification as a "singleton" rather than as a co-twin

(Rosendahl et al., 2013, p. 71). The core features of grief in non-twin

sibling experiences were like the grief found in a co-twin experience

(Rosendahl et al., 2013).

       The identification of siblings as a support system in an aging

world has been researched from the context of a conjugal relationship

rather than the sibling loss itself (O'Bryant, 1988). This research project

explored the function and roles that siblings took on when a sister or

brother experienced the death of their spouse. O'Bryant (1988) found that

it was more often a sister or brother who took over the everyday tasks

that the spouse who had died had previously completed. A second finding

indicated the strength or connection of mature sibling relationships

continued to be integral to the positive health status of the sibling who

had experienced spousal loss (O'Bryant, 1988). Research on later-life

wellness suggested that being involved in relationships with siblings,

cousins, uncles, and aunts contributed to positive outcomes for the

bereaved party (Ryan & Willits, 2007).

The childhood checklists of constructs and findings seemed to

lean towards the idea of locating a sense of orderliness for the experience

of grief and for age-appropriate expression. As both an experience and

definition, grief defies the idea of orderly behaviour and expression.

There were very few published research studies on sibling grief that

explored the lived experience from either a narrative perspective or an

older sibling relationship. The inquiry that Moss and Moss completed in

1989 contemplated grief experienced in the lives of siblings who were

older from a qualitative orientation applying seven previously determined dimensions.

Summary. The psychological determinants of the individual grief experience have been the priority for research exploring the impact of grief as well as the confounding factors that produce more complicated grief experiences. The context of the relationship and the biopsychosocial dynamics found within the relationship has limited research available. This is particularly evident in the lack of informed research with the advanced sibling system.

In this section of Chapter 2, I have explored the relevant knowledge that exists concerning grief in a sibling relationship. There is limited research available due to the relatively young field of grief and bereavement. However, given the professional fields and domains of major academic disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, nursing, medicine, family therapy, spirituality, and gerontology, there is a limited amount of focus on siblings at any age. It is surprising to me that this area is understudied and that there is limited knowledge available that relates to the relationships of sisters and brothers who have been impacted by the death of one or more siblings.

The research that has been completed has value in its findings and recommendations. Kramer and Bank (2005) reflected that there has been little consideration given that is specific to sibling relationships concerning the impact of psychological dynamics on individual and family functioning.

Call for research. The researchers who completed studies on sibling grief continued to identify the lack of information available. There is a need for inquiries that specifically address the relationships of siblings and their stories of bereavement. Davies (1993) identified the need for sibling bereavement research and areas that would involve interventions to support the grieving sibling. Research on bereavement experiences of siblings has focused on children and adolescents and middle-aged siblings, with a call for research among the adult sibling grievers (Davies, 1993; Marshall, 2009; Marshall & Davies, 2011; Robinson, 2001).

Moss and Moss (1989) commented that the elderly siblings have been overlooked, and as such, this area would benefit from additional qualitative studies to explore the reactions of the griever from a relational perspective. Cicirelli (2009) also recommended that further studies in the

area of sibling grief, plus the need to include ethnic groups other than Caucasians.

What is curious to me about the list of understandings, explanations, observations, and research is that each one focused exclusively on one or more aspects of the grief experience. The subject matter seems to be one of difficulty in determining a concise definition. Grief and bereavement occurs because there is a relationship between people and one person dies. The experience of grief and bereavement is that it cannot occur without a relationship; it is a relational process.

My hope is that my inquiry project will contribute to the knowledge available and provide a way forward to call for the unheard narratives to be told about relationships, about siblings, and about lived experiences.

Chapter 3: The Story Behind the Inquiry Process

"Interpretation is thus inherent in storytelling; both tellers and listeners constantly interpret each other. In a functional sense, storytelling prepares people for encountering difficult situations, but often the story itself is the difficult situation" (Frank, 2010, p. 86).

Orienting the Inquiry

Introduction. In this chapter, I describe the design and the details that were managed in the creation and orientation of this inquiry. In my research, I focused on the social phenomenon of grief that was the lived experience of bereavement by adult siblings. The defining components and the different constituent elements of this phenomenon were storied from a relational perspective.

In the first section, I discuss my evolution from the role of clinician to becoming a clinician–inquirer. I then identify how narrative inquiry, as a qualitative method, complements the exploration of grief. This is followed by an accounting of how I used two methods from the field of narratology; then I briefly explore the elements that support a story.

In the Landscape of Design section of this chapter, I discuss the details of the inquiry landscape, which include the recruitment strategy of

finding and inviting conversational partners. I follow this with a description of the informed consent used. In the next segment, I articulate the management of shared conversations. I follow this with a discussion on problems that arose during the inquiry. In the remaining sections, I address the value and probability of transferable learnings to other people and situations. I then describe the creative process that took me into the thematic organization of story presentation.

As a clinician–inquirer. I struggled with the idea of being the inquirer with an emphasis on not wanting to be cast into an expert role. This reluctance had kept me from participating in a formalized journey of academic learning for a long period of time after I had completed my master of science degree. However, my own curiosity and my professional desire to support siblings in their grief experience became a motivator that would not rest. As I searched for additional information in this domain of deep experience, I began to recognize the limitations of what was available and what was not available for shared knowledge. I began to seriously explore my bias about being involved in research and came to recognize that the word researcher held a sense of authority that I did not want to bring into this project. As I attended to the writings of other researchers and authors, I began to formally explore the ideas of

social and relational constructionism. I began to acknowledge that as a clinician I engage in inquiry on an ongoing basis in my professional work. My curiosity about grief and sibling relationships became a reason to engage in the role of clinician–inquirer. My goal was to contribute a small aspect of knowledge in the professional domain and to support and promote the stories and voices of bereaved siblings, including my own.

The identity of inquirer was a good fit for me as it allowed me to pursue this project from an academic and experienced clinician perspective. It provided me with a way of bringing in respect, value, and a level of authenticity, while it opened the door for an active role. An additional aspect of being this type of inquirer also meant that I became the author and the reteller of stories. I was at liberty to share why I was doing this project and of my own experience as a clinician supporting others, as well as a sibling who also has a story about sibling grief. Did I tell each conversational partner all the details? No, I clarified aspects of my story when the conversational partners asked me. When I did share, I ensured that I kept details to a minimum as I did not want my story to become larger in this project than their stories.

As part of any formal inquiry, it is expected that there be an identification of any assumptions or biases that might be reflected in the

project. My underlying assumption is that when a sister or brother dies, the surviving sibling will have grief experience. I am not however making any assumptions as to whether this experience is defined as positive or negative. My inquiry was designed to explore the stories shared by bereaved siblings. I was seeking the relational and multiple aspects of knowledge and how grief is revealed in stories.

Guiding the inquiry. In this project, I focused on the social experience of grief in the adult sibling system. The emphasis of my inquiry was not on death; rather it focused on life and how life is lived when there is a significant change in a long-term sibling relationship. Death is the catalyst that created the transition into changing the relationship of siblings.

In this inquiry, I sought to explore and understand some of the characteristics in how grief is known. My objective in the creation and design of this project was to bring forth active stories and voices that have not previously been shared. To create a guiding direction for this inquiry, I framed the main inquiry question as, "What is the lived experience of an individual 60 years and older who has had a sibling die in recent years?" I focused the inquiry on grief from the perspective of siblings who chose to participate in this endeavour. I utilized the word

grief and chose not to provide my definition of it, recognizing that each

of my conversational partners had her or his own definition of grief. My

intention was not to make assumptions; rather, it was to gain and share

knowledge with my conversational partners. The process was an

unfolding and emergent experience.

My primary purpose in this project was to explore the experience

of grief with the surviving sibling 60 years of age or older with the hope

of augmenting the understanding of the family life cycle.

A qualitative orientation. In seeking a qualitative methodology

for this project, I was guided by my original objective of locating the

stories of grief and finding an approach that would open conversations

about the actual stories of grief and siblings. I started to investigate the

field of narrative as a suitable method of inquiry. The choice of utilizing

a qualitative inquiry was a selection that evolved out of my belief of how

social life unfolds. Social life emerges from a multivoiced relational

world that includes external others as well as internal others. As an

example of internal other and voice, I have a lived experience of

bereavement and grief from the death of my sister, in addition to which I

am now of the age group that is identified in my inquiry. I have memory

of conversations with my sister from intersecting stories throughout my

life span, which include our conversations as she was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

Qualitative inquiry provided me the opportunity to engage in the relational exploration of knowledge experienced in an older sibling system. I chose a qualitative inquiry for several reasons. A qualitative design provides the opportunity to acknowledge and use subjectivity. Neither the process nor the outcome is considered as final. I rejected quantitative methods as I felt some discomfort with the idea of distancing and maintaining a formal role. Qualitative methods tend to explore the evolution of information and prefer an active voice (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Frank 2010; McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Sprenkle & Piercy, 2005). My intention was not to disregard the value of quantitative inquiry but rather to clarify the reasons that I believe a qualitative method is the appropriate approach for this inquiry. As a methodological approach, the utilization of a qualitative design has parameters that provide permission to have different conversations with bereaved siblings. The emergent idea that inquiry is curious inquiry occurs for me daily as a systemic therapist. My preference as an inquirer is to have an active voice; I did not want to hide behind a cloak of neutrality.

I initially considered grounded theory as a framework for my inquiry. I was familiar with grounded theory methodology from previous coursework and research papers that I had pursued in my professional work. Over time, I recognized that the concepts of grounded theory did not fit the underlying goals for this project. Grounded theory incorporates a highly-structured method and minimizes the role of inquirer. My choice of a qualitative method is a narrative paradigm as it closely aligns with my experience as a clinician and my desire to have richer conversations that involved me.

A mixed field in narrative design. The qualitative design that I created for this project came from the field of narratology. The term narrative has numerous definitions dependent on the orientation of the speaker and the listener. As a psychologist and family therapist, I was familiar with the therapeutic model of narrative therapy. As an inquirer, I was not as familiar with narrative as a method for inquiry. The first influence that focused on narrative as a research method that provided me with an understanding of how to approach the qualitative world from a narrative orientation came from Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) seminal work titled *Narrative Inquiry*. This textbook provided me with the details

from both the philosophical and practical concepts for approaching the storied world.

In the 2000 writing of *Narrative Inquiry*, Clandinin and Connelly wrote extensively about their process as researchers in the relatively young field of narrative as a research model. Their experience culminated in the pursuit of writing and teaching about narrative as a methodological inquiry. Clandinin continued her earlier work by providing additional detail in her 2013 textbook titled *Engaging Narrative Inquiry*. In my inquiry, I utilized the paradigm of narrative inquiry.

A second author that influenced my choice to use narrative is sociologist Arthur Frank. This method of inquiry is titled dialogical narrative analysis (Frank, 2010, 2012). I found it useful to follow the process that Frank outlined in his 2010 work called *Letting Stories Breathe*.

Narrative analysis provided a means for me to engage in critical thought, and it deepened the understandings of the multiple threads that exist in stories of relationship and grief. In this project, I sought the stories of experience. Dialogue points to the interchange of how the story informs individuals as to how they make sense of their lives. I am aligned with narrative as a method of inquiry as it provided me with focus to

listen to and explore the specific detail involved in the construction of a

deeply personal experience of grief. The telling of stories was and is a

relationship of meaning making and understanding of self (Clandinin,

2013; Frank 2010).

Exploring each story provided me the opportunity to hear multiple

voices in the story, which contributed to deepening my recognition that

no story is ever a final story. It is through this exploration that I began to

hear how knowledge was transmitted through the stories told by siblings.

Stories shared were and continue to be lived experiences rich with detail,

emotion, philosophy, questioning, uncertainty, certainty, value, and with

the essence of identity at any given point on the temporal dimension.

The temporal dimension consisted of the past, present, and future

telling and retelling of a story that has infinite influence on a storyteller

and listener. The word story provided a living definition of a deeper

conversation that held emotion, memory, and experience.

Utilizing the guidance from Frank's (2010) descriptive

explanation of dialogical narrative analysis provided me with a different

way to experience interpretation with a narrative orientation. The

conceptual understanding of slowing down my thought process moved

from an abstraction to a concrete and determined effort to manage my

tendency to engage in quick thought process. The concrete progression

involved relaxing into a state of receiving each of the stories in an

intimate way. This was a different process for me and highlighted the

distinction between being a clinician and being an inquirer. As a

clinician, I do not always have the luxury of larger amounts of time to

ponder and truly explore a story in detail. I am limited by a constraint of

a 50-min session and the amount of time or finances that a client can

afford. In following the process of this multiyear inquiry, I could allow

the stories to deliberately come to me. I could explore potential

discourses in the stories that provided a glimpse into how stories can

become bounded in relational influence.

The basis of interpretation in narrative analysis is to focus on

locating factors that provide context. Context may come from other

voices in a story or from available resources. External stories that

originate from existing systems such as culture, family, and institutions

may influence the storied experience shared by the storyteller. Using a

narrative method involves the deliberate position of resisting the

temptation to engage in the creation of a finalized story; rather, it is a

method of expanding the story for the listener, the story itself as an entity,

and for the teller. Narrative method involves being open to the movement

of the story itself. For me as the inquirer and the listener, narrative

became about listening to the content, as well as listening for impact and

the unfolding process of story. In this inquiry story, the storyteller role is

the conversational partner, the bereaved sibling; the listener role belongs

to many, including me as inquirer, the bereaved sibling, and the reader.

My story is involved in this inquiry. Individuals live their stories. Story is

the oxygen of social lives.

The progression of these elements closely aligns with my

understanding of how life is social. It is a good fit for me with how I

function as a clinician. In the therapy room, I am deliberate about

creating invitations of collaboration with people to enter into relational

dialogues with me.

Utilizing the ideas from narrative analysis in this inquiry, I am

listening for stories of influence running in the background of the told

story. My primary model is drawn from Clandinin's (2013) work of

narrative inquiry. And for me, Frank (2010) adds a richness in this work

that I have incorporated into my narrative perspective.

Learnings from narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry provided

me with the abstract processes that addressed the approach of

engagement utilizing narrative inquiry. These processes supported my

question of how do people story their lives. Clandinin and Connelly

(2000) originally introduced narrative inquiry by providing a historical

timeline of influential inquirers and thinkers in a variety of social science

fields. Among the major concepts discussed was educator John Dewey's

idea of identifying experience and that it is through the linking of

experiences that humans gain "continuity" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000,

p. 2). The contribution of continuity is the linkage needed to create a

sense of permanence or foundation in a storied life. In describing the

work of anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson, Clandinin and Connelly

(2000) described the depth and complexity found in the concept that "all

of us, lead storied lives on storied landscapes" (p. 8). They further

elucidated Bateson's work on the concept of author perspective, which

belongs in the sharing of stories that became known as the "I" in

narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 9). The reference point

of this concept spoke to the involvement of inquirer as an active

participant in all aspects of inquiry activity.

The concept that a lived experience linked with other experiences

became the foundational concept that situated participated life as a

storied format. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) focused on bringing life as

experience to the forefront of their quest to provide a reputable, scientific

theoretical, and experiential way of how to be and think narratively in inquiry. Engaging in an inquiry means that as an inquirer, I am in a storied landscape from entering the inquiry field itself, which is populated with ideas, people, imaginings, learnings, and experiences to writing my story of what I discovered.

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) conceptualization of narrative inquiry provided me with a methodological understanding of how to frame curious questions and participate in conversations with a perspective on analysis that brought about a narrative synthesis or product. Narrative inquiry was defined as a method of providing a stage to hear, to listen, to understand, to imagine, to participate, to give value and to open the multiple stories that resonate with individuals as shared conversational partners on this life journey (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Frank, 2010; Gergen, 2000; Gergen & Gergen, 2012; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Narrative is about relationships between people, between and about ideas, shared dialogue, and experience. Socially and ethically it is a responsive and challenging method of inquiry. It holds the inquirer to high standards of performance, reporting, and involvement.

Guidance from dialogical narrative analysis. The premise of dialogical narrative analysis is that it is through stories that humans express their lives. Frank stated that "stories enact realities; they bring into being what was not there before" (Frank, 2010, p. 75). Frank is diligent throughout his explanations and explorations that the primary responsibility of any analysis is held to the highest ethical standard of ensuring that the story and the storyteller is never finalized. There is no completion, no final word; it is a constant evolving process (Frank 2005, 2010, 2012). The primary process of narrative analysis is to engage in thoughtful contemplation and practice by exploring "what the story does" (Frank 2010, p. 13).

Dialogue refers to the interactive and relational context of story to the storyteller, story to the listener, and story to story. Every story has components of other stories. Story is the instigator of life in the human world. Story works with people, on people, and has a dynamic energy of its own (Frank 2005, 2010, 2012). Dialogical narrative analysis provided me with a heightened capacity to explore the stories involved in my inquiry and enriched my experience as an inquirer–storyteller.

Frank (2012) identified several essential ideas to take into consideration when exploring story from a dialogical narrative analysis

orientation. The principle understanding inherent in this orientation is that the definition of dialogue refers to multiple voices. Essentially this refers to multiple voices in a story, not the number of people involved. The position of the inquirer demands an assurance of communicating the story and the storyteller from an orientation of being "with rather [than] about" (Frank, 2012, p. 34).

Remembering to be dialogical is the concept behind the second consideration. The inquirer becomes the conduit in which stories dialogue with other stories. This position of consideration creates opportunity for multiple voices to be heard and shared (Frank, 2012).

The third consideration involves the understanding that every story has components of other stories. The voices of other stories in a told story may be known or may not be known by the storyteller. Frank (2012) stated that "when given close consideration, no story is ever anyone's own, but is always borrowed in its parts" (p. 36). The fourth idea is that there is no capacity to conclude a story or person. Lastly, Frank (2012) believed that it is essential to ensure that one does not take a summarized view of any story, as this would inhibit story and create a position of reductionism.

Dialogical narrative analysis provided me with the guidance and learnings to explore stories from a novel perspective. It created potentials that led me to hear and tell a new story of linkages that had originated in the stories told by grieving siblings. Dialogical narrative analysis ensured that I moved forward in a different thought process.

Elements in support of story. There are varied opinions and arguments in defining what constituted a story. Utilizing a narrative inquiry format involves a complex process of the lived, told, retold, and relived continued stories in the studied narratives for both the conversational partners and the inquirer (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Frank, 2010, 2012).

In this inquiry, a story became the purveyor of ideas that contributed to my knowledge of how grief shows up in a lived experience. For the purpose of this inquiry, I identified the concept of story as a fluid process that involved an idea, an event, contemplation, a plot, or possibly an inquiry to be explored in a format that involved a listener and a storyteller. It is social life in a shared format that became a collaborative venture. In this inquiry, stories linked the social entity of life in a loop of collective experiences and memories held by the sibling.

An obvious question asked about an inquiry that focusses on relational experience and story belongs in the domain of how is an individual self-identified? Restating the question in its simplest form it becomes, "Is there a self in the story?" The idea of individualized self was prominent in the era now referred to as Modernism. In Modernism, self was not only a separated and distinguishable entity; it was also responsible for independently interpreting and managing the world. The post-modern emergence of self as being in relation to others was identified by early practitioners and researchers in distinguishing systemic theory, which incorporates all relationships as being intertwined (Becvar, 1997; Gergen, 2000, 2009; McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Sermijn & Loots, 2015; Silverman & Klass, 1996; Stroebe et al., 1997).

The identifying of self in the narrative occurs in the lived stories experienced from birth to death. Clandinin (2013) defined this as being "the multiplicity of each of our lives –lives composed, lived out and told around multiple plotlines, over time, in different relationships and on different landscapes" (p. 53).

Identifying self from a storied orientation spoke to the constructed idea of self as it emerged from the perspective of the past and present narratives operational within each life (Gergen, 2000; Sermijn & Loots

2015). The fundamental notion that there was a capacity to distinguish a

separated self identifiable in story existed in the use of common language

such as "I" in the stories told by siblings. Yet as I listened and

participated in the sharing of these stories, it became apparent that the

constructed idea of self rested in the identification as a sibling. The self

entity known as "I" emerged in the co-responses of the sibling system.

The concept of self emerging in relationship with others is core to the

definition of social constructionism (Gergen, 2000, 2009; Gergen &

Gergen, 2008; McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

   The relevance of storied landscapes providing the establishment

of relational self are revealed in relational patterns, influence, language,

and values, which become common and unique to a story (McNamee &

Hosking, 2012). The definition of something unique to a story refers to

the complex levels and ideas of shared history and culture found in

relational processes and told in story. The term "local" refers to the

significance of unique in this concept (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p

40.) The identification of local is regarded as the ongoing understandings,

traditions, values, and meanings that emerged from a particular family

system. Local functions as both a noun in naming and an adjective

responsible for the identification of describing a phenomenon that is

specific in the contextual field of a story. The concept of historical refers

to the ongoing flow of experience and stories that link together as a

reference that carries the flow of time as relevant and significant for the

storyteller.

The idea of culture as a systemic concept for understanding and

acknowledging significance in the stories of families and for members of

the family has been gaining recognition over the past two decades. In

1995, Pare used the concept of culture in family systems. Pare identified

that "all cultures, families tell stories of themselves—stories about who

they are, about where they have been, and where they are going" (1995 p.

18).

In summary, the language, and ideas of local as being unique or

specific together with history and culture create markers. The work of the

markers is to point out opportunities for the emergence of collaborative

negotiations of knowledge both for me and my conversational partners.

They provide the relational foundation that had capacity to move the

listener, the storyteller, and the story in a forward direction.

The Landscape of Design

Inviting the story. My initial conversation with each sibling

began with a full discussion of informed consent and consisted of asking

clarifying and identifying questions. These questions began with

identifying pseudonyms (i.e., Anne, Cathy, Edward, Marlow, Paul, as

well as participant's age at time of death of the sibling, and age at the

time of the interviews).

The commencement of the conversation served as grounding for

establishing respectful and interactive boundaries placed on the

conversation. My intent was to create as comfortable a zone as possible

with a potentially difficult experience that would allow each

conversational partner to participate at her or his chosen level of

interaction.

Guiding questions became prompts to support the engagement of

the story between my conversational partner and me. The initial question

became the directional orientation as my question inherently suggested a

past orientation. This created internal controversy for me as I did not

want to establish temporal limitations. What did become evident to me

over the conversations was that this question did not establish any rigid

telling of the past.

As an entry point into the narrative field of the story, I asked a

question that served as an invitation to begin the process of sharing story.

I used the same question with each conversational partner: "Is there

something that you can share with me that will help me understand who

[name of sibling] was and what your relationship was with [him/her]?"

Locating conversational partners. I pondered what would be the

best method for connecting with bereaved siblings that would be the least

intrusive and the most efficient. The efficiency was primarily about

limiting the number of people contacted and who might fit within the

parameters of my established inquiry. In addition, I felt that it was

important to ensure that there was minimal possibility of complicated

grief situations and thus possibly endangering an already fragile story.

Upon considering all the listed dynamics, I realized that I had a potential

referral base from my past and present colleagues who were in

professional fields. I made the decision to contact several past and

present colleagues with whom I have worked in a psychosocial field. I

wrote a letter describing my inquiry project and what type of grief

experience would be appropriate (see Appendix A, Letter of Invitation). I

requested that they contact me if they knew of anyone, and, if they felt it

was appropriate, they could also pass on the contact letter and have the

individual contact me directly.

The final composition of conversational partners who came

forward to participate in the project surprised me. Three of the

conversational partners had responded positively because of an inquiry from a colleague. I was given their names and contact information, and I contacted them. A fourth partner requested inclusion in the project as he came to know about the project through one of my extended family members. A fifth partner requested inclusion in this project as her brother (Edward) had already participated in a conversation with me. Edward then shared his experience of what it had been like to participate. She (Marlow) asked to participate.

I screened for several factors that I defined as relevant and integral to the project. There were two distinct criteria for inclusion: (a) being 60 years old or older when a sibling died, and (b) being at least six months out from when the death occurred.

My area of inquiry delved into a potentially difficult experience of death and grief. This life changing experience has the possibility of creating a fragile and psychologically vulnerable context of being. One of the parameters that I introduced in my invitation to participate in the inquiry stated that the death was at least six months out from the immediacy of the life experience. I believed that this minimum engagement requirement provided some psychological distance and time, which provided a different context to the inquiry that I was interested in

storying. The exclusion criterion of this inquiry was integral for the

protection of psychological vulnerabilities in the experience of grief. The

criterion that I identified as exclusion was the experience of complicated

grief. Complicated grief is a term used to identify that a bereaved person

is experiencing difficult and complex aspects in the process of grief. The

bereaved person experiencing this is psychologically and emotionally

more vulnerable than one who is not experiencing complications. There

are an infinite number of reasons as to why an individual may be

experiencing complicated grief. Among these concerns are mental health

concerns, a history of negative relational issues such as sexual or

psychological abuse, active involvement with alcohol or drug misuse, or

violent death of a loved one.

The delimitations in this project confined the exploration of

relational grief to a specific age group: those being 60 years and older.

This project did not explore the lived experiences of siblings under the

age of 60 years. The criterion of being from a sibling system excluded all

other relational definitions, such as elder parent and adult child, nor did it

include partner relational experiences. The primary criteria that the

bereaved siblings be at a minimum six months out from the death of their

sibling was also a primary delimitation. This excluded experiences of anticipatory grief and immediate relational responses to a death.

Conversational partners. The conversational partners in this project ranged from 60 years of age to 87 years of age at the time of the conversations. There were three women and two men who participated in the inquiry. Initially, I had not considered countries of origin as aspects relevant to this inquiry. Country of origin became known to me through the telling of the stories. Each of the conversational partners described a major type of cultural influence in their relationship, which emanated from their country of origin. The conversational partners were originally from Britain, Canada, Denmark, Scotland, and the United States.

As age was a major criterion, I confirmed the facts for three specific age categories. The categories were age of the surviving siblings at the date of the project conversation, their age at the date of the death of their sibling, and the age of the deceased sibling at date of death (see Appendix B, Table B1).

In consideration of informed consent. I sent an email of introduction to each of the siblings who had identified that they would like to be included. I also provided each of them with a letter called Informed Consent. Elements in the consent form included confidentiality,

the right to withdraw, potential risks, and voluntary participation. I

ensured that there was time to reflect on participation. Each potential

conversational partner was required to sign the document and send it

back to me. Once I received their signed consent, I established dates,

times, and method of communication. I reviewed the written consent

form verbally with each conversational partner prior to beginning the

shared conversations with her or him. At the beginning of each

conversation, I informed each conversational partner that I would be

listening to and transcribing his or her story. They would then have an

opportunity to clarify my transcription through one of several options,

including follow-up conversation, written discussions and additions or

deletions, review of transcribed conversations, asking questions, and

reviewing and providing input on their shared stories. None of the

conversational partners wanted to read or review the transcribed

conversations. All the conversational partners made the decision to read

the story that I wrote about their story. Each of them provided input and

clarifying information that was included in the final versions for this

dissertation. Their involvement ensured the authenticity of the shared

stories.

In order to ensure the choice of anonymity in my dissertation, I discussed the concept and parameters of anonymity in regard to any potential identifiers, which included names and place of residence. I discussed anonymity with each conversational partner. I identified anonymity from the perspective of each participant's story and the information contained in each story. The anonymity needed to be upheld for each of the characters identified in the story, including the sibling who had died.

The careful deliberation of ethical considerations set the stage for acknowledging that my inquiry project participants required a higher standard of awareness than that of individuals engaged in ordinary interaction. Ethical considerations are both rigid in their wording and intent and permeable in the moment. There is a plurality of meaning and interpretation in the understanding of ethics.

I recognized that there were ethical and moral considerations that both I and my conversational partners considered from initial contact to the final fulfilment of our joint action. I recognized as well that conversational partners were also involved in ethical considerations unspoken but in existence between us and in the stories shared. A few of

these considerations involved the limits of the stories shared and

considerations of how other members of the family might respond.

Vulnerabilities in shared story are often located in the places

where people are most susceptible when they share stories of their lived

experiences (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Frank,

2010). The concept of vulnerability enlarges the idea of ethics to

encompass the power of inquiry, the story shared, and its impact on

storytellers and listeners.

Ethic comes from the Greek word meaning character. The plural

of ethic as ethics, describes the context of character as a philosophy of

correct conduct. Correct conduct of necessity indicates that there is a

right (correct) and a wrong (incorrect) way of conducting oneself. These

important dynamics are reflected in the establishment of my relationship

with the people who became conversational partners. In the written

format of the informed consent, the elements of confidentiality, the right

to withdraw, potential risks, and voluntary participation were clearly

identified. Prior to engaging in a deeper conversation, I initiated a

discussion about informed consent (see Appendix C) and encouraged

questions with each conversational partner.

Attributes that I wanted to bring to the experience were respect and an experience of value, respect being the cornerstone of the collaborative relationship. Value is deemed as a subjective term and therefore I offer a personal definition of what value looks like to me. My basic definition belies my epistemological belief that relational value is supported by an infrastructure of high regard, inherent importance, and honoured with positive worth.

Management of the shared conversations. I conducted the conversations by telephone and the use of Skype. The conversations spanned three countries and two Canadian provinces, each with different time zones. The conversations ranged in time from 60 min to 120 min. Each conversation was audio recorded and then transcribed. The recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist who had signed a policy of nondisclosure (see Appendix D) and the parameters of confidentiality. I reviewed the audio recordings while proofing each draft transcript to ensure accuracy prior to the final printed version of the transcript. Once the conversation was recorded, it was transcribed. I made corrections on the transcript before it became a finalized version. The common corrections included missed words and misspelled words. All

written and verbal material from the conversational partners is secured in

a locked storage cabinet within a private office.

Unexpected problems. An unexpected problem arose when I

discovered that two of the conversations had not been recorded. I spent

time pondering how I could rectify this situation. I informed each of the

conversational partners as to what had occurred. Both were sympathetic

and graciously agreed to participate in a second conversation with me.

This experience revealed to me how vested the conversational partners

were in this project. Each of them identified that sharing her or his story

was an important story and each indicated the importance of supporting

me in my inquiry

Steps to story synthesis. This section identifies the process that I

used to share how I chose the stories that I moved to a position of

forefront in this inquiry. I recognize that another inquirer or reader would

potentially choose different stories or perspectives to highlight. This is

the true experience of identifying the existence of multiple truths and

realties. The versions that are contained in this document have been

created in full collaboration and support of the each of the storytellers. I

chose the stories. My process of synthesising the specific aspects or story

perspective began during the actual conversation with each

conversational partner as I wrote down things that caught my attention as each partner shared her or his story. Following is a description of the process I followed to create a coherent synthesis of the five distinct stories that became the basis for this project and written paper.

I then made a copy of each of the original transcripts that became a working transcript by incorporating wide columns on each page in which to begin open coding. Open coding for the purpose of this dissertation means a method of locating and naming aspects of the story that caught my attention (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Foss & Waters, 2007; McNamee & Hosking, 2012; S. McNamee, personal communication, April 10, 2014). What caught my attention was a storyline or statement that had rich description.

I returned to my main question and explored the subquestions to ensure that I chose aspects that corresponded to my original quest in this inquiry, which was the lived experience of relational grief. I went through each transcript and each audio recording and reviewed my field notes again.

In my process of creating a synthesized story I wrote out the descriptive words that caught my attention in the columns. After I reviewed the five transcripts, I then cut out each noted section and placed

them in one pile. I then began to sort the main pile by similar and

different ideas and then placed the piles on my dining room table. I

processed the piles over several days by reviewing them and resorting

them into different configurations. During this time, I began sharing with

interested colleagues what I was beginning to watch unfold regarding the

shared stories. I ended up with 20 possibilities to explore from the stories.

I worked with this list and began to distill the 20 possibilities into distinct

narrative codes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131).

In June of 2014, at the International Conference on Contemporary

Grief and Bereavement, which was held at the University of Hong Kong,

I presented an overview of the story of my inquiry. At that time, I

discussed the main naming of the narrative codes that were emerging

from my project. I received feedback and interest from session

conversational partners as well as from individual conversations with

other conference participants throughout the week. All of this proved to

be a valuable resource for me as I continued to explore the emerging

story lines and characters. In addition to this, I shared the initial coding

and corresponding naming of the distinct story possibilities with several

of my professional colleagues in the provinces of British Columbia and

Alberta, Canada.

The reader cannot know what was left out of the stories or what stories were left out due to the limitation of the written word and the nonparticipation in the original conversations. As a collaboration of telling stories for this project, I was guided by the story told to me by my conversational partner. The stories of necessity were compressed to provide a coherent synthesis of my journey and story with this inquiry.

I kept a field journal in which I recorded my thoughts and experiences, nonverbal responses, impressions, and responses immediately following each conversation. Keeping a field journal provided me the opportunity to reflect on the conversations at a variety of different levels. I kept a journal from the moment I began the PhD program until the finish of the program. This journal provided me an unrestricted and confidential resource to ponder my thoughts, feelings, learnings, and frustrations that became a resource and record of my development and growth throughout the experience.

The next aspect of this process was to create a coherent schema that opened spaces in the story told by a conversational partner and provided an opportunity for multiple voices to be acknowledged. In the creation of the schema, I wanted to provide a means in which my conversational partners, the readers, and the public audience could easily

survey my narrative process. To identify significant moments in the retold sibling stories, I decided to utilize the term theme. Theme is not a word that is easily incorporated into a narrative inquiry. Clandinin (2013) defined the use of a "resonant thread" (p. 143) to indicate the context of a common story. She clarified that "the threads [are not] fixed, frozen, or context (life) independent (Clandinin, 2013, p. 143).

It is essential that the reader understand that my use of the term theme in this inquiry does not create a definition of limit on an idea, story, or person; rather, it is used to signify a location of a story. Frank (2005) stated that "themes situate the stories; they do not substitute for the stories" (p. 969).

The details of the stories are found in Chapter 4. The final stage in this process was the creation of a narrative in which I told the story of the relational grief that had been socially constructed from this inquiry. This is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Delimitations. There were several aspects of this inquiry that belong in the definition of delimitations. I selected five conversational partners. Each of them was able to dialog about his or her experience and all desired the opportunity to share their sibling story. A second delimitation is that I explored story lines that were related to grief.

The value of transferability. In qualitative inquiries, it is crucial to provide parameters of external validity. The significance of establishing generalizability and transferability attends to discrete dynamics that provide a soundness and establishment of academic rigor. The concept of generalizability is used in reference to how well the discoveries in a project can be applied or attributed to others, be that groups or populations. Critics of the term generalizability suggest that it is important to not force a quality to fit into a term where it does not fit. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that the concept of generalizability in a narrative inquiry style of inquiry is not appropriate when it suggests a linear formula of this dynamic is responsible for that outcome. The authors preferred to use the term transferability to provide a coherent sense of value and academic rigor.

The idea of transferability provides an active and reflexive dynamic offering the experience of what makes sense to any setting or environment be it individual, group, or specific population. Transferability permits a depth of connection and shared understanding in which to take the learnings and story from one aspect and recognize it in a different dynamic and environment.

I have taken the steps of offering the original transcripts of the recorded conversations with project participants, the draft versions of their stories, and the inclusion of their active voices in the final version of my retelling their stories. This is accomplished in the next chapter in which the stories have been opened for perusal by the academic reader.

Chapter 4: Bereaved Sibling Stories

My purpose in this inquiry was to explore the stories told by bereaved siblings. In this chapter, I share the stories that emerged from the voices of my conversational partners. In a scientific tradition, the contents of this chapter would be identified as data. Remaining true to a narrative inquiry with a foundation in social constructionism, I focus in this chapter on the stories shared by my conversational partners as retold by me as the inquirer–author.

First, I provide the rationale behind my decision to present the learnings of this inquiry with the story originally told to me by each of the bereaved siblings. Next, I present the stories shared by my conversational partners (Anne, Cathy, Edward, Marlow, and Paul, and my personal story of sibling grief). I have left participant quotes verbatim and for the most part unedited. I include thematic titles that reflect the knowledge that emerged from each of their lived experiences of grief. In the final part of this chapter, I identify the external metanarratives that guided me in providing critical thought to the influence on specific elements that I was curious about that were presented by my conversational partners in their lived story.

Inquiry Rationale

My rationale for using collaboration to present the stories and the knowledge I gathered in a thematic structure is based in my foundational belief in the epistemological process of social constructionism. A cornerstone of the social constructionist paradigm is that gaining knowledge occurs as a process and emerges from the shared understandings that come forth from a relational process. There is no one experience that rises above others to be the ultimate final truth. The cornerstone of this idea is the belief that there are numerous influences on any given idea; essentially, it is about locating the creation, understanding, and transmitting knowledge about an idea, concern, topic, or theme in a shared process.

To be true to this idea, I maintained a process of being curious in both my questioning and in listening to the stories as they unfolded. My focus was on encouraging and recording the unfolding of collaboratively obtained knowledge in this inquiry. However, along the way, I have been surprised at the intensity as well as the length of time it has taken me to write each story and each chapter. This chapter held numerous surprises for me as I pondered questions that aroused my interest by catching my attention as I listened over and over again to the audio recordings, read

and reread the transcriptions of each conversation. There were times when this felt as if it was a messy and disorganized endeavour.

I have retold the stories by using the words shared with me by each conversational partner. To ensure accuracy and relevance, I sent my version of the story to each of conversational partners for his or her input, comments, criticism, and corrections. In each story, I have included verbatim the siblings' words that were shared with me. Including the text from the transcripts allowed me to ensure that the second purpose of this inquiry was honoured, that being to create a venue where previously untold stories about grief could be shared with others.

Each conversational partner's story is a standalone story and is organized via themes. I have organized each story by the theme that had meaning and significance for the original teller of the story and that caught my attention as the inquirer. As the main author of this chapter, I have included the voices of the conversational partners.

Each theme is relevant in meaning to the story. During the process of open coding the original transcripts and audio recordings of the stories, I identified 21 codes. From this pile of codes, I began to recognize a variety of patterns among the codes that translated into core themes for the inquiry. During this progression, I shared the process and

background information with professional colleagues, family members,

and professional unknown audiences at three public presentations as

identified in Chapter 3.

The themes emerged after lengthy consideration and much critical

thought about the stories, the process, and knowledge that I had gained

about each local family. Themes emerged and then functioned as a

method for me to create a cohesive presentation of stories. There are

themes that are unique and significant specific to the sibling storyteller.

The unique themes evolved from the local family knowledge and

contained the local cultural and local historical influences identified by

the unique family system. There are also themes that emerged for the

overall group that had significance in the collaborative development of

this project. These themes are broader and more generalized to this

bereaved community of siblings. Each of the group themes reflected a

saturation mark in the inquiry. The saturation occurred spontaneously vis

a vis the specific identification by a sibling. The group themes reflect the

intersection of when a story is in dialogue with other stories. The stories

speak to each other.

Group themes include how we met, on grief and death, holding

connection, the footprint of the family, and story reflections. The

category on how we met identified my original connection with the

bereaved sibling. The purpose of this is to identify the different ways that

my conversation partners came forward to participate in this project. I felt

that this was essential to include as it tells the micro-story of the

construction of the relationship that I established with each

conversational partner. It was this relationship that provided the structure

in which the storyteller and I were able to move forward to share stories

that were intimate life moments for each bereaved conversational partner.

The category called the footprint of the family emerged from a

shared conversation with Anne, one of the conversational partners.

During the telling of her story, Anne identified that I would need to know

the footprint of her family. She implied that it was necessary for me to

understand. Once I began to pull out phrases and sentences of description

to begin open coding for this inquiry, I recognized the significance of this

phrase. The story shared by each sibling contained the same type of

information. None of the stories contained lived experience or grief only

from the relational orientation of sibling to sibling. Each storyteller had

told me about his or her family system and identified all the members in a

sibling system. I understood this experience as the context in which all

the bereaved siblings were setting me up to understand and appreciate their families' history and culture.

The third thematic category, on grief and death, seems obvious given the focus of this inquiry. As the listener and reteller of the stories, I became aware that the storytellers spoke of what they had learned about grief and death from their own experiences. This category had significance beyond the idea of grief and death. It held the learning and the knowledge of how the stories came to life. This category encompasses the relational story of knowing grief and death. It is different from the literature that identifies grief as an individual experience.

Holding connection was an unexpected theme that emerged as a collective group theme. All my conversational partners shared a special story with me about their sibling. Each of these stories felt like a gift to me. The offering of these special storied moments came after we had shared quite a bit of time together. Holding connection developed from the insight from each special storied moment had strong ties that provided a continued connection for the bereaved sibling and in some cases for the family system.

The theme of story reflections provided a category that captured

my position as collaborative partner in this endeavour. This thematic

category became the bridge in which I could articulate my critical

thought to the stories shared and how I was experiencing the story.

Although I provide analytical thought throughout each story, this

category allowed me to create an opportunity for my continued

movement of thought.

Conversational Partners

In this section, I introduce my conversational partners in their

storied experience of lived grief. The first story is from Anne who told

about the impact that her older brother's death had on her life. The

second story comes from Cathy who shared her story about grief after the

death of her sister Natasha. The third story was told by Edward who

identified his grief after his brother died. In the fourth story, Marlow

shares her experienced after the death of her older brother. Edward and

Marlow are brother and sister from the same family of origin. In this

inquiry, I did not provide a comparative review of any similarities or

differences shared in each of their stories. It would be interesting to

combine the two stories. I chose not to undertake this task; rather, I

continued to focus on each of my conversational partners as singular

stories. The next story is from Paul who talked about his grief on the

death of his younger brother Robert. The final story comes from my

experience as a bereaved sibling and reflects on my story about my older

sister, Annette.

Anne

      How we met. Anne sent me an email and identified that she and I

had met recently at a professional conference in the United States and we

had been introduced by a mutual acquaintance. In that email, Anne wrote,

"I lost my brother when I was 61 (he was 65). I would love to help you

with your research." I remembered meeting Anne at the conference, and I

remembered feeling honoured that she was willing to share her story. I

contacted her immediately to establish a date and time to connect. We

agreed to talk via telephone on February 22, 2014. The conversation

lasted for 80 min. Anne was 66 years old at the time of our conversation.

      In Chapter 3, under Unexpected Problems, I identified that two of

the audio recorded conversations had malfunctioned and were not

recorded. One of those conversations was the one I had with Anne in

February. It was another month later when I discovered that I did not

have a recorded version of the wonderful story that Anne had narrated for

me. I contacted Anne and shared with her what had occurred. Anne

responded very quickly and clearly stated that she was willing to talk

with me again. I share this aspect of my project with the reader to identify

and demonstrate the willingness and the connection of how my inquiry

project quickly became a collaborative and shared project. Once I invited

others to participate in the project, it no longer belonged exclusively to

me.

My second conversation with Anne took place in April of 2014.

The first sentence after hello from Anne was her inquiry about the lost

conversation. She confirmed that I would get what I needed. Following is

the excerpt from the conversation transcription. A is Anne

(conversational partner) and D is Deb (inquirer).

D: Thank you so much for talking with me again.

A: Ok. It's interesting that happened to you, hey?

D: Oh ya.

A: Maybe we were just meant to have another conversation.

(Anne)

We discussed what I had discovered about the malfunctioning

recording cassette and then Anne asked, "It's working now . . . you're

sure?" and I responded, "Oh, yes. I've actually got, my . . . I've got two

recorders this time." We both laughed, and Anne said, "Oh, okay"

(Anne).

The background of this conversation was laughter and a sense of

reconnection rather than the creation of a new connection. This

experience formed a sense of difference for me as we began. Upon later

reflection, it occurred to me that this shared moment of beginning the

second conversation had been a stepping stone of how I came to truly

understand that I, too, was another character in this inquiry story with

Anne.

Anne began her relational story by identifying the sense of safety

she had with her brother Peter.

So, he was one of those people. And, umm, like I said to you, you

know if you're in a life raft in the middle of the ocean and you

were going to depend on somebody, I would want my brother to

be in there. (Anne)

Anne was 61 years old when her older brother Peter died in 2009.

Peter was 65 years old at the time of his death. Anne reported that Peter

"had been dead for three days before anyone found him."

The footprint of the family. This is a unique theme that

originates from the specific identification from Anne. It is the first time

that I have heard this type of storied introduction, and it resonated for me as a clinician. As a clinician, I often encourage information from the perspective of others identified in a family system. As a bereaved sibling myself, I have regularly had to explain the detail of my family constellation to others when I have shared my story of grief. As an inquirer, I was immediately captivated by the phrase and curious to hear what it contained.

Anne stated, "You need to know the footprint of the family." She carried on by stating that "this is a brief rendition of our history." Her emphasis on the word "this" provided an indicator that it was the abstract that would introduce me to the rich story of her life. In 1958, the family of seven consisting of her parents and five children emigrated from Denmark to Canada. Anne was 10 years old when the family moved, and her brother Peter was 14. Anne identified a "before" story and an "after" story with a geographical move for the family unit being the temporal division of the stories. The after story took precedence in the shared time we spent together.

Anne's after story began with the difficult experiences of emigration from Denmark to the east coast of Canada, where the family struggled to make a living. Anne shared that the family loved the east

coast and that they were sad having to leave the area. The decision was made to move the family to a large city located in a Canadian province in the prairies. The move was to create a more solid financial base for the family as there were more job opportunities available than what existed in the east. However, as the family discovered, the geographical move did not substantially increase the finances for this family system. Anne identified that "we moved from a country of more to a country of less." The family of seven moved into the top floor of a house in the inner city. Their home consisted of three rooms: the dining room, kitchen, and bedroom. There were cots, a box spring that the sisters slept on, and a mattress that the boys slept on. A crib was added to this home when a younger sister was born after the family moved into their three-room house. Anne lived in this arrangement from the time she was 13 years old to 17 years old. She shared that she had happy memories there and remembers friends wanting to "stay at our house," even when the friends had more. Anne narrated these years of struggles as "my parents were stubborn" and "they wanted to be in Canada." Anne deepened her story by using the metaphor of this as "the footprint of the family" and gently placed her brother's life experience in this narrative.

As I listened, I found myself writing down words such as "strong," resilient," "creative," and "inspiration" (personal field journal). It is beginning to dawn on me that I am listening to a story of survival from its most basic elements for this family.

The fragile time. The fragile time is a unique theme that is specific to the experience of Anne. This theme reflects the knowledge that Anne had in her story of grief and is focused on the earlier time frame of Peter's life. It held a poignant and deep story line for Anne.

Anne shared that Peter was a "tall, strong, good looking man" and "angelic." Anne referred to different times in Peter's life as fragile. In her identification of fragile times, it became obvious that these times consist of important transition points in Peter's life. From this perspective, I noticed Peter's vulnerability in developing his life, with the human aspects of physical, social, mental, and psychological growth. Anne's description of Peter's physical self was contrasted with the psychological and emotional experience of the vulnerabilities he experienced. Anne continued with her story and shared that "my brothers never felt that they belonged" and that "they never wanted to own land in Canada." Owning land in Canada would have indicated a sense of settling and creating a home. Anne identified her own sense of self as an immigrant and stated,

"I feel a bit rootless, no aunts or uncles; no streets named after us. It is a different experience in immigration."

Anne's identification of not having the physical presence of extended family or the influence of family ancestry contributed to the rootless theme. This was a poignant comment for me as it suggested that these elements were important markers from a historical and cultural perspective. The combination of these elements suggested the strength of local historical and local culture knowledge for this family told through the voice of Anne.

Continuing with the theme of a fragile time, Anne shared a before story of Peter, age 12, when he came home after finding out that he failed the academic exam. In Denmark, if a student passes this specific examination, they are entitled to free university education. This examination determines the future direction for the student either in an academic or technological career. It was in retrospective thought that Anne identified that she remembered Peter announcing that he was going to get drunk and that he drank soda water, which was a non-alcoholic drink. Anne reported in the after story that Peter seemed to use alcohol and drugs in "a constant search for meaning."

Anne and Peter's older brother had passed the examination and made "fun" of Peter. Due to the family move, the eldest brother was not able to take advantage of state-offered education; this was one of many unfinished stories from the family of origin that we did not move into as we continued to focus on the relationship of Anne and Peter.

Anne described Peter:

You know he was 14, uhhh. Peter hadn't really grown into himself yet, ummm . . . and he was still a little bit smaller. And from 14 to 18 he just like . . . became tall, muscular, and excessively good looking. He was always a bit of a loner.

Peter came into his immigration story unfinished from this school experience and unknown to himself. Peter grew to adulthood in the intersected stories of being identified as an immigrant and as a teenager in an urban inner city. Anne continued in her description of her brother and remarked that "as a teenager he was a fighter," and" no one messed with him." Anne mused that "there was probably some depression that was starting very early on that none of us knew."

Peter was 19 years old when he came home one day and announced to his parents that he had joined the military. Anne reported, "He hated the army"; he did his required three years and left the military.

The engagement in the military afforded Peter the opportunity to move out of his family of origin system and begin to move into his own life. Peter found a path that was away from the inner-city lifestyle and he was looking to find a career. Anne was a young teenager when her brother moved away from the family and their life.

As we moved deeper into the story, it became clearer that Anne had a strong desire to ensure that Peter's life story was available for third and fourth generations in their family. When he died, Peter had adult children, grandchildren, and a great grandchild, as well as numerous nieces and nephews. Anne spoke to the future and the importance of family story:

> And then all of a sudden, the third and fourth generations, this is the story of my brother, which like . . . No. Well don't . . . keep it real. If you don't know, you don't know. It's better to say I don't know what happened, there's like bits and pieces. But you don't know.

Anne explained how Peter's family of present, being his children and ex-wife, would not have been able to share in his story when there was missing information. Anne said,

So, he had these two sides. And umm, and so I think that the

family couldn't make sense of it, and I never experienced his dark

side, except some of the little comments he would make. And

even then, they were like minimal.

Anne described her experiences of the two sides and noted that it

happened when he was under the influence of alcohol.

And umm, but yet at the same time . . . he had a few drinks in him

and he'd say things to me, like "You think that you're too good

for us." So, things flipped, they could flip to the dark side . . . and

luckily, I never personalized that, I knew . . . it was . . . like . . .

okay that's the dark side of Peter, and so . . . it was easier for him

to say things in his dark side. And that he was not a big talker.

Anne identified how Peter's daughters had difficulty in their grief

experience. Anne shared that she thought it was this incomplete

knowledge of who their father was that was partially responsible in the

grief experience of Peter's adult daughters.

And he couldn't really take compliments easily, easy, you know

so it was . . . I think . . . just a lot of compromising limitations.

But I don't think he shared that. I've talked with his daughters

and, I feel like part of their grief . . . that their Dad is that . . .

ummm, he never really shared himself with them. And so . . . an

example of that is that there was some stories floating around with

his ex-wife and the two daughters about, Peter from Denmark that

were completely confabulated! And how did that story come?

That is not . . . that is not true at all. (Anne)

Anne said, "Whatever that story is . . . it's buried with him," and

"I don't want anyone to confabulate, anything about that." I wanted to

clarify what this part of the Anne's story was about and entered the

narrative with her stating,

D: Ya, so that's really important for you to continue with the

Peter that you know and to share it with the rest of the family so

they get to know him as well.

A: Ya and then . . . just if there's something we don't know, then

just say I don't know.

Anne responded by affirming it. Anne continued by sharing that

she had "checked with the rest of my family and they all looked . . .

Whaaat?" and then Anne emphatically stated that "there was nothing

deep and dark there."

One of the troubles that appeared in the narrative is the fact that

no one seemed to know Peter in his life. Each of Peter's primary

relationships seemed to know him through one story rather than interwoven stories of family. It was in a strong and clear voice that Anne brought herself and the voices of her siblings as the source of bringing aspects of Peter to the attention of others in the extended family. By doing this together, his siblings provided a deeper story of difficult and complex life experiences that Peter had lived.

      Multiple deaths in Peter's life. This theme is unique and specific to the story told by Anne. The multiple deaths identified in the context of Anne's awareness of her brother identified the experienced impact of the death of others on the life of her brother.

      During his time in military service, Peter and his then girlfriend got pregnant and married quickly. Their first born was a son, who as a teenager was diagnosed with schizophrenia. It was a chaotic time for this family and turned to tragedy when their son committed suicide at the age of 21. Peter's marital relationship was not able to recover from this painful tragedy, and Peter and his wife divorced.

      The second death that impacted Peter as Anne shared the story of her sibling knowledge of her brother's life was when she shared that Peter "had gone back to one of his early girlfriends" and they had reengaged in a relationship. The woman that Peter had been involved

with committed suicide, and Peter blamed himself. Anne articulated the background story on this segment of Peter's life by saying,

> She committed suicide, but I don't think [long pause] . . . , it was just about that, I think she had a lot of mental health issues 'cause she had a history of suicide. So, you know, the son committing suicide, girlfriend committing suicide . . . then he was present when my Dad had a heart attack. (Anne)

An important death that Peter experienced was the death of their father. Peter and another one of their sisters, who was a nurse, had gone to visit their father. While Peter and this sister were visiting, their father had a heart attack. Neither Peter nor his sister could revive their father, and he died while they were trying to resuscitate him.

Anne moved back into telling about an earlier segment of her brother's life story. She continued by relating his career path. Upon leaving the military, Peter was successful in attaining a position in a large fire department where he had career success, evidenced by upward mobility to senior positions. Towards the latter years of his career, Peter's unit responded to a motor vehicle accident. Their rescue unit was unable to free the people caught inside one of the vehicles. All the young people

in the vehicle died. Peter left his position and was given a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder.

The protection of an older brother; an unheard voice. Peter was the brother that Anne named as she narrated her deeper and intense times of struggles as an adult. It was Peter who guided Anne out of a "bad relationship" when she was in her early twenties by literally jumping into her car and naming the difficulty that he saw going on in her relationship. It was Peter who gathered another brother to assist in physically and safely moving Anne and her belongings out of harm's way. Peter showed up for Anne when she was in critical times in her own life. Peter's voice is not heard in this story as it is narrated by Anne. As I listened and pondered this grief story, I became aware that as both the listener and storyteller, I could place Peter's voice in this retold story. As an older brother, he would have seen and known Anne in a way that she could not as she lived out her moments of experience.

From his vantage point of being an insider to the family and an outsider watching her experience, he could discern the differences in the intersected stories that bound Anne. A strength of the sibling relationship can be that a sibling can know her/his siblings differently than the siblings know themselves. Anne spoke of times when he would come to

her home and stay with her and "we would have these great talks."

Although Anne did not approve of how the dark side came to be a loud

story for Peter, she recognized the influence of alcohol and drugs on his

experience as well as the trauma that insisted on showing up for Peter.

On grief and death. This theme is one of the group themes that

emerged from the collective stories of my conversational partners. Anne

articulates her knowledge of grief and death in telling her lived

experience as a bereaved sister.

Anne shared that she grieves the loss of what could have been life

for Peter. Anne believes that he died because he was "tired . . . of living."

She described it as

> my grief is that he didn't get to sparkle. I miss him (long pause). .
>
> . . I wish he was alive and stepping into his real self . . .
>
> I feel like he died lonely and broken-hearted. I don't know
>
> what his stuck point was, but he couldn't follow through . . . and I
>
> think the biggest grief for me, for him, is that he never lived his
>
> life the way he really wanted to, or couldn't seem to push himself
>
> past that edge and . . . he had some dark demons. (Anne)

Continuing with her narrative on her grief for Peter, Anne stated

with a quiet sadness the lost opportunity for Peter to know his future

family: "And he had just become a great grandfather. So, he had just had a picture taken with his great . . . because his granddaughter had had a child."

Anne shared her experience of shock upon learning of her brother's death.

And he looked still looked young and vibrant, and good looking and you know he looked a lot healthier than what he was . . . but . . . it was a shock for all of us that he, had this. . . had just turned 65, he didn't even collect one OAS cheque.[1]

Anne shared that an autopsy report had revealed that there was no alcohol or drugs in Peter's body when he died. She believed that he was tired and had had enough of life.

Holding connection. This theme came spontaneously from each conversational partner. In holding connection, Anne has shared with me an intense experience that provided her with connection and insight into her relationship with Peter.

Shortly after Peter died, Anne and her family of present had travelled to France for a preplanned holiday. Anne had stated that she

---

[1] OAS is the federal Old Age Supplement for people who have reached 65 years of age in Canada.

was not certain she wanted to go; however, the trip had already been planned, so she decided to go. Following is her recounting of the dream:

And then, I got to France and I was thinking, we went to this little town, ah . . . up in the hills just above Nice . . . and walked around these beautiful little streets and I thought . . . like oh . . . Peter would have loved this.

And we went to this store called Neige, you know like white [and] . . . with all white linen because it was really hot. So, we bought some white linen clothing because we thought, like, it's probably a good thing because everybody was wearing it, we're going to wear it too. And then that night, I had a dream that he was standing in the small street outside that store wearing all white.

White linen pants, white linen shirt. And I remember in my dreams thinking he would never wear that. Hahaha (light laughter). I was even aware in my dreams and then he was standing with his feet apart, with his hands on his hips, looking really strong. Looking at me, and ummmm . . . I said, "Peter, Peter, you're alive! Like oh my god!"

And he didn't say anything, so I ran up to him to hug him because I wanted to prove that he was alive and I could **feel** his body. But you never had a dream that you could **feel.**

And I kept on hugging him and really feeling his muscles, because he was very fit and strong. And, ummm . . . and I hugged him and I could feel him and I said, "You're alive! You're alive!" And then he said to me, "I'm okay," and then I woke up. And then after that I thought OH, he's okay and so I had a few dreams like that later.

But that changed my experience . . . and I had this feeling that he was really with me. And that he was there.

It's ah . . . it was like something shifted for me. I thought like . . . No, it's okay . . . you just . . . I'm okay and then I just woke up and I shared it with my daughter the next day. And she goes, wow, that was a pretty profound dream. And ya, it's just ahh . . . because I feel better, I don't know why, but I feel better . . . so that's how I was able, I was able to let some of that awful feeling go. (Anne)

For Anne, her dream involved a reconnection with Peter who was well and healthy. In her telling of the dream, it was the first time that

Anne identified the early trouble she had with the death of Peter. From her dream experience, Anne awakened with a sense of healing that took away her disquiet and "troubled" feelings.

As Anne narrated her dream, she made a comment suggesting that she "had a few dreams like that." In Anne's story, there was an invitation of openness to additional visits with Peter in a dream state. Anne found emotional relief and an integration of what had been troubling her in her initial experience of grief immediately after the death of her brother.

Story reflections. The story Anne shared about being a sibling with Peter brought forward previously unknown aspects of how life for Peter had been complex. It is Anne's voice and relational experience that has provided her with the story of a complex life for understanding Peter. As she spoke, my understanding and empathy for Peter increased as her story moved forward. The dark difficulties Peter experienced seemed to emanate from larger world narratives and from interpersonal experiences. Who he was and how he functioned in various roles speaks to the multitude of other stories that people find themselves in connection. Relational constructionism identifies how different narratives create different understandings or knowledge of the world people inhabit. People are never alone on the planet, and they are never alone in social

life. Alcohol and drug use increase the likelihood that people are

separated from themselves and from others. The first drink of alcohol or

ingestion of drugs generally brings a sense of connection and warmth

from others; yet, when alcohol and drugs are overused they create

isolation from others.

The story questioned Peter's absence from his own life. The

unspoken question that I heard as the listener was how did Peter become

mute in his own life story? In part, this story is Peter's memoir authored

by Anne in support of her brother and retold by me. This story brought

the "trouble" that Anne spoke of at the end of our time together as to

what bothered her. That particular unnamed trouble worked itself through

in the performative nature of her dream. In this sibling story, it is the

silenced story voice of Peter that comes to forefront of the story that I am

listening to. I came to know Peter through Anne as she gave voice to her

relationship with this brother.

Following is an excerpt from the transcription of our shared

conversation. It starts immediately after Anne had shared her dream. A is

Anne (conversational partner) and D is Deb (inquirer).

A: He's okay and so . . . I had a few other dreams like that.

D: Yup . . .

A: But that changed my experience . . .

D: So that . . . shifted something for you?

A: Yes, it did. And I had this feeling that he was really with me. And that he was really with me. And that he was there. You know, that kinda magicial feeling that we have around death.

D: Is that how you define it?

A: It's ahh, it was like something shifted for me. I thought like . . . no, its okay, you just woke up. And I shared it with my daughter the next day, and she goes Wow, that was a profound dream. And ya, it's just . . . ahh . . . because I feel better. I don't know why. But I feel better.

D: That's fantastic.

A: So, that's when I was able, I was able to let some of that awful feeling go.

D: That's so. . . . It sounds like it was a real gift.

A: Ahha.

D: Ummmm. A: Yup it was good. Yup. (Anne)

In this excerpt, both Anne and I are involved in talking about the dream and how it changed Anne's experience of her brother's death. Anne had an "awful feeling" that she described in words; her verbal

expression indicated strong emotion behind that particular phrase. As a

storyteller, Anne did not overtly express an emotional tone; however, it

was her pauses and ahh's that indicated to me that something was behind

the words. I respected Anne's choice of telling her story and did not

prompt her to explore emotion. I respected her choice as I did not want to

influence her to move into an emotional state that she had not chosen. I

gave full support to Anne to share her story in the manner that was

natural to her, particularly given the social situation of being my

conversational partner in this inquiry. Her experience is her lived story.

As she spoke about the dream changing her experience, I

prompted for more information about this story line by asking about a

shift in her experience. She defined what that shift was by saying, "I had

a feeling he was really with me." In this awful feeling and experience of

grief, Anne found resolution; she "felt better" by knowing her brother

was with her. The resolution felt by Anne was accomplished in an active

sense of relational presence for the two siblings. Anne created a legacy

for the family by ensuring that Peter's story is alive and heard in the

family.

I found several pieces of literature that provide description of

dreams and visits from those who have died. The literature is rich with

experience and thick description (Moffat, 1982). It is not of the scientific world. The experience of dreams is another story in this relational description of how grief becomes known to a bereaved sibling. There are multiple stories as to how dreams function and share knowledge for a griever. As examples of external stories that provide a basis of understanding, I have included two separate pieces of literature (see Appendix E) that speak to dreams of loved ones. I chose to place the external stories in an appendix rather than in the story so as not to disrupt the flow of the sibling story.

The difference in the published literature on dreams is that the bereaved relationship is of a marital relationship that focuses on the death with the death of a wife

The relationship of spouse is different from the relationship one has with a sibling. What is striking in similarity is the white clothing, emotional expression, and physical aliveness. Both deceased loved ones appeared and related to the undead ones in a manner that was taken to be normal. For Anne, her dream involved a reconnection with Peter who was well and healthy. In her telling of the dream, it was the first time that Anne identified the early trouble she had with the death of Peter. From

her dream experience, Anne awakened with a sense of healing that took

away her disquiet and "troubled "feelings.

The depth of connection in the relationship has a strength that is

not spoken to directly and reminiscent of Anne's description when she

shared "so I had a few dreams like that."

Anne shared the importance of the dream in which her brother

spends time with her. The dreams provide a connection for Anne and a

continued dynamic relationship with her beloved brother.

Anne's reflections. After I completed a draft of this story, I sent

it to Anne asking her to review it and provide me with her thoughts. I

introduced the story to her by acknowledging that it was my voice as

author and that it was important to me that she have an active voice in the

story. This provided a deeper level of collaboration between us as

storytellers. Anne's involvement and participation provided me with a

reflective experience and explored the generalizability of what I heard

and brought into her story. Following are excerpts of her response and

further conversation with me.

> Thank you for your email and attachment. As I read it I realize
>
> that there is still so much to be said but thought it interesting that
>
> you were able to link the part where Peter did not know himself

and could not fully realize his full potential but he seemed to know me. Made me cry. Just as in dark times he would make remarks like, "You think you are too good" to lighter times when he would say, "You are so smart" and "I'm proud of you" (when I graduated from university at 50!). I believed he meant it. He came to me in another dream this week and walked into my house wearing the clothes he had on for his wedding but he had been drinking and I felt very cautious in the dream but I still let him in and then he disappeared. I just invite these dreams where he is various ages (12 thru to 65). I appreciated the dream connection in the writing too.

Feel free to use aspects of my story for conferences. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this research. I really believe that the part that was unknown about Peter is the real story. What could he have been? He seemed to be unable to truly enjoy the roles he was given as a son, veteran, husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, fireman, etc. He was always at war with himself but we all loved him. As siblings, the 5 of us who are living remember him with a sad fondness. His daughters do as well. (Anne)

Cathy

How we met. A couple of years ago, I was attending professional meetings that lasted for several days. I met Cathy during the meetings. We worked together over this time on the same project. Cathy and I had not met prior to the attendance at this meeting. As part of our group introductions, we were each asked to identify any projects or papers that we might be currently working on. I shared information about my sibling grief inquiry project that I was working on as part of my requirement for the completing of my PhD program. I outlined the criteria that I had identified for participation in the project. Later that day during a break, Cathy came over to me and stated that she would like to participate and that she believed that she met all the criteria. We agreed that I would be in contact with her again when I began my interview process.

Several months later as I began to seek siblings who were willing to share their stories with me, I sent an email to Cathy asking if she might be interested in discussing the particulars of the criteria for participants and the informed consent. Cathy met all the criteria and signed the informed consent form. Cathy lives in a different country than I, and we had to both puzzle though the differences in several time zones to arrive at a mutually appropriate time in which to share a conversation. Cathy

and I shared a conversation that lasted for 95 min on February 5, 2014.
All the quotes in this story are from that conversation. C is Cathy
(conversational partner) and D is Deb (inquirer).

> D: I think I told you a little bit about my project, that it is part of
> fulfilling my PhD requirements. I am looking to share and honour
> stories about siblings. You and I had chatted a bit in (city deleted)
> and that was such a lovely gift you gave me, I thank you for that.
> C: Well, it was not very long after my sister's death, so it was
> something that touched my heart. (Cathy)

Cathy had immediately shared with me that her heart, emotional
self, was affected by our subject matter. The sister grief story had begun.
I asked Cathy if she had anything that she would like to start with, and
she responded that she had been looking forward to my questions.
Cathy's older sister Natasha had died from breast cancer in the fall of
2012. Cathy was 60 years old when Natasha died at the age of 63.

The footprint of the family. This is a group theme that came
from Cathy as she described her relationship to her sister. Cathy began
her story by sharing her early experience of living as part of a military
family. Her father had a military career beginning with the Scottish
Highlanders, then the British Army, and finished his career with the

Australian Army. The family moved every 2 to 3 years. Cathy identified

that the children in this international family were born all over the world,

with one child being born in Hong Kong, another child in Singapore, and

a third child in Germany. One of the consequences of a military lifestyle

for the family is that the children changed schools and school systems

every 2 to 3 years. Cathy shared a summary of her memories about

Natasha:

>And because my sister was three years older, she would often be
>
>told to look after me, ummm you know in terms of the new school
>
>we were starting. She was always very good, she used to get very
>
>anxious about me, with my socks and shoes. Particularly when we
>
>were in Singapore because we used to go to school in a big army
>
>truck. And so, ummm I had a kinda thing about socks, I didn't
>
>like putting them on and she would always say, "Put on this,
>
>we're going to be late, we're going to be late." Mom, make Cathy
>
>put on her socks. She was always kinda, whisking me along
>
>behind her and three years is quite a lot when you're small.
>
>(Cathy)

As the eldest child in this family system, Natasha became the

protector for both her younger siblings. As the older sister, Natasha had a

developmental advantage over her siblings and was the wise sister to an adoring younger sister. Cathy came into the world with Natasha always being connected to her. Cathy described her as "my go to person."

> I asked Cathy a question about her relationship with Natasha.
>
> D: Umm, I'm wondering what kinds of aspects of the relationship with your sister, that you might be missing now. That you have become aware of?
>
> C: Umm as a sister confidante really, you know, she was my closest friend and she was my go to person and . . . aggh, I think my Dad died, just as I got married, I was about 26,
>
> D: Ummm (I'm letting Cathy know that I am actively listening).
>
> C: And my mom had a good long life. After my Dad died. She died at 80, so she was 58 or 59 when dad died.
>
> D: Ummm.
>
> C: She (Natasha) was always there for me. . . . She was a good sounding board, to stuff. I mean . . . recently, I mean really recently. On the 27th of January, my . . . this is extraordinary. My aunt died, I think when I saw you I had just come from (details omitted due to specific identifiers). We had scattered a third of my sister's ashes in Scotland and then the last third. The next day

I got a message that my aunt had passed over and ummm I mean . . . so I just . . . I just want to get to the point . . . is that there is no one to share this, my sadness.

D: Yes.

C: But I . . . have no one to share with so . . .

D: That was quite recent . . .

Cathy was weeping audibly with shortened breathing, and she quietly said, "Sorry, Deb." I reached out to her over the phone and said, "It's okay." The shared emotion from Cathy was a window into the depth of her grief. The description was based in relational dynamics of connection and shared lives.

Cathy shared that Natasha was the one who "had a strong moral compass," and "she was a private person," "she was a good person," "and she really loved her family." Cathy described her relationship by identifying that Natasha was "my sister–confidante and closest friend."

A continued relationship. This theme is specific to Cathy's story. Cathy emphasized the aspects of this sister relationship that were continuing after Natasha's death. The relationship between Cathy and Natasha was strong in life and continues to be strong in death. In

response to my query about changes that have occurred since Natasha died, Cathy told me,

> Well, I mean, I would say Deb, that I have quite as strong connection with her in death. Which is obviously, quite different because she is not here . . . and ummm . . . and I mean, I've felt her presence very much in helping me and in guiding me, her family, and my own life . . . so ummmm in a kind of funny way, maybe some of the things I may not have shared with her in life, I now freely share with her in death, cause I can't not.

And Cathy emphatically stated that "there are no secrets" between her and Natasha.

For Cathy, her sensed presence of Natasha provides a continued opportunity for these two sisters to continue to share life dilemmas, laughter, and life experiences. The continued connection in this narrative is a strong resource for Cathy; rich emotion accompanied this segment of her story. As she shared with me her sense of Natasha's continued presence, Cathy expressed laughter and tearful sadness.

The family history of growing up and living in different parts of the world was an important dynamic in this story. The family connection and love that exists in this family system involves the adult children of

both Cathy and Natasha. In Cathy's present family system, she has two

grown daughters, and in Natasha's present family system there is a

daughter and two sons. Cathy identified them:

> I have two daughters and of course they are very close sisters, and
>
> my sister's daughter is a very close cousin to my two daughters.
>
> And I have the three of them. My youngest daughter is pregnant
>
> at the moment and so is my sister's daughter. They will be having
>
> their babies within months of each other so I'll be busy.
>
> Later on in our sharing, Cathy went back to the story of her

daughters and niece: "My daughter and my sister's daughter are both

pregnant now and having their babies" and "Both are having boys."

Cathy introduced her other daughter in to the story and said, "My older

daughter has two boys so we'll have four little boys running around. . . .

I'll be moving into a warehouse" at which she began to laugh.

Cathy continued to share her experience of having grandchildren

by saying, "You know, honestly I never ever thought about this part of

my life, but it is the greatest, greatest pleasure I can't even begin to tell

you. There is absolute kinship." Cathy commented that "it breaks my

heart, she [Natasha] would have loved being a grandma and she would

have loved this baby which my niece is having." Grief showed up in this

statement as an intake of breath, a mumbled "Sorry, Deb" as Cathy

moved into continuing her story.

It has been important for Cathy to maintain contact with her adult

nephews and niece by sharing meals, coffee, and family holidays with

them. Cathy was very clear about not wanting to be seen as taking the

place of their mom; rather, it was ensuring her continued relationship as

aunt and family. Cathy identified herself as a "memory keeper" for her

sister's family, which also includes Natasha's husband, whom Cathy has

known since he was 17 years old when he initially met her sister.

On grief and death. Cathy discussed the idea of the death of

older siblings as being like the death of a parent and as a reminder of

mortality. Cathy went on to state that "there's not much you can do about

it, Deb, you go when you go, no use worrying about it." This astute

comment was bookmarked by laughter and a lightness of speech. It was a

rich segue into Cathy's exploration of her experience of shock that

Natasha had died. In Cathy's words,

> But it was certainly a shock. Ummm . . . She was a very healthy-
>
> looking woman, my sister, she was a good-looking woman and
>
> she always looked well. She kept herself trim, she would go to
>
> yoga or the gym, she always looked after herself . . . you know

beautifully kept, she would do her nails, get her hair done and all

those things. (Cathy)

Cathy went on to share that Natasha was a healthy woman; she

experienced good pregnancies and no real illnesses. Cathy commented

that she was not as diligent about herself as Natasha had been in ensuring

that she got a yearly medical, including pap tests and breast scans.

Natasha's family struggled with understanding the diagnosis of breast

cancer that Natasha received. Natasha was compliant with her treatment,

and Cathy described her as continuing to look very healthy. The families

spent New Year's together and Natasha "looked beautiful." After this

brief family holiday, everyone returned home to their lives. Cathy was at

work in another part of the country when her brother in law called her

and he was crying, telling her "It's not good." Cathy got on the first

airplane she could and went directly to the hospital. Natasha died 10 days

later, surrounded by her family, including Cathy. Cathy said, "We

thought she was all through it, she had been cleared" and "that I know

now, how out of touch I was, I mean, . . . I, it didn't occur to me that she

would die with it."

It was Natasha's daughter who told Cathy later that Natasha's

type of breast cancer was an extremely aggressive form. Cathy shared

that it was 10 days before Natasha died. Cathy and her brother in law
were in the room with Natasha when her brother in law called to her and
said "Cath, Cath, . . . I think she's going." Cathy shared more of the detail
of this intimate time and then said to me, "It's kinda like . . . it's such a
mystery, isn't it? Like when you see a baby being born, such a mystery.
Cause there they are and she's breathing and then they are not."

Cathy addressed the mystery held so deeply and differently from
experience of living in those moments to the experience of the moment
that death arrives. Cathy reflected that "despite her looking so young and
healthy, it was her time" and that "she had done her miles."

On further reflection, Cathy described her philosophical
understanding of death "as a transition." Death and grief were familiar to
Cathy. Her father had died when she was a young adult, she was with her
mother when she died, and she accompanied her mother in law on her
death journey, among others. It seemed that Cathy gave a title to this part
of the dialogue by saying, "But after all one has more grief in life as you
go through it."

Cathy identified her brother in her telling of the death of their
mother. All the family was there, including her sister and brother at
different times. Cathy's mom died during the night, and it was important

for this family to not let their mom be alone in the dark, so Cathy and her

brother decided to be there until the sun came up. "And again when

Natasha died, my brother and I stayed beside her until dawn." (Cathy)

During our conversation, Cathy initiated a reflection on the

existing stories of death, grief, and bereavement. She spoke about the

dominant cultural stories and described them as "same old clichés they

talk about, the same old . . . they just really close people off." We

identified other dominant pre-existing stories that held direction about

how grief may or may not be expressed. The direction of expression that

we identified was the inhibition around communicating a lived story of

grief. Among these dominant stories are the simplified versions of "the

stiff upper lip," "it's a British thing," and the experiences from World

War I and World War II such as" do not talk about the deaths" and the

famous "stay calm and carry on" expression utilized as a coaching type

of statement from the British government in coaching their citizens

during the War years. Cathy identified that that she thought the

"Victorian era was better at expressing grief and language than we are

now." Cathy's identification of her attraction to the Victorian era of

expression caught my attention. It had been a long time since I paid

attention to the writing from this era, and I decided to explore what was

available that might provide me with a new understanding. I found a poem by Tennyson (1849/1982), which I have included under Story Reflections in Cathy's narrative (see Appendix E).

The hidden story. As I was listening to the audio version of our conversation and I reread the transcript, I suddenly became aware of this hidden story of sibling grief in Cathy's lived experience. This is a theme that is unique and specific to the storied grief shared by Cathy.

As Cathy took me deeper into her life story and we moved into the footprint of her family, it became obvious to me that there was a hidden story that involved another sister sibling relationship of two different sisters. The hidden story involved the relationship between their mother and her sister, their aunt. I identified my perception of this generational story to Cathy, and together we pondered it. Cathy narrated the story of her mom's life. Cathy's mom lived until she was 80 years old. Cathy, Natasha, and their brother were involved and supportive of mom throughout her life. Their mother was only 58 years old when she became a widow. Cathy shared that "she [Cathy's mom] really, she really, had a long and prolonged and extended grieving for my father after he died."

Both Cathy and Natasha supported their mother in her "sadness" and "depression." Their story of grief identified the depression and sadness that kept their mom emotionally and physically away from an active role in life at different periods of time.

In Cathy's lived experience, her aunt, her mom's sister, was an important person. Cathy described her relationship with her aunt as being like a daughter. Cathy shared that she had lived with her aunt and uncle when she was in her early twenties and reported on birthday celebrations and visits as a young child and throughout her adult life.

This was the introduction to the hidden story of grief in Cathy's story. Cathy said,

> And when mom died, I went back a number of times to [city name removed], and ummm you know, saw my mom through her . . . her expressions and the way she would laugh and movements. . . . I can't explain it, you know. It's like my mom, but it's not my mom, you know.

Cathy identified that her aunt shared qualities that Natasha had in being a "good person," "always looked out for people," and "did all the right things." Cathy's grief at the death of her aunt came out as she began telling me about the last 18 months of her aunt's life. Her aunt had had a

debilitating stroke and was bedridden. Cathy wept as she talked and paused before she spoke: "But . . . I . . . have no one to share this with" and then she identified Natasha. "You know, she [Natasha] was very fond of my aunt and my uncle. They were of that family circle –the closest you know."

The missing person in this grief story is Natasha, Cathy's closest go to person, who had the shared memories and understandings of family life experiences.

Holding connection. This is a group theme and emerged toward the end of my shared time with Cathy. The theme of holding connection had a strong sense of linkage for Cathy. As we began to end in our shared conversation, she related the following:

Kookaburra is an Australian native bird that sits on trees, laughing, . . . I mean it's quite unusual. You know, rare bird, it's got a Kingfisher's head. It's kinda a code name for Natasha being around and at Easter time, when we were down at the beach near here . . . we had a Kookaburra that came and sat right with us, where we were picnicking, and I mean . . . and that's unusual, so much as sitting on top of the trees laughing at you. She [Natasha] liked Kookaburras . . . we have a Kookaburra as our symbol for

her and ummm yeah, so whenever she's kinda wanting me to know stuff. I get . . . like I woke up this morning, quite early and it was dawn and I could hear a kookaburra laughing. I hadn't heard one in a while and I thought, "Oh, what is Natasha having a good chuckle about now?" Then… I have my chat with Deb today, I wonder if that's it?

Identifying an animal or bird is known as a spirit connection and has profound meaning for many cultures in the world. It is an ancient and spiritual practice full of wisdom. This is a practice that can be found across the millennium and in a variety of different cultures, which include Indigenous people throughout the world; First Nations, Celtic, and Asian, to name a few (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1989; Cowan, 1999; Luttichau, 2009). I was intrigued with how the kookaburra had become the purveyor of Natasha's presence. Cathy remarked that this was a bird that Natasha had enjoyed seeing and hearing; it was known for laughing. One of the first premises of finding or acknowledging one's spirit protector or totem is an intense draw of affinity as well as an internal feeling and identification of knowing it. The Kookaburra puts everyone in the family on notice that Natasha has a current presence in their lives. It is an experience of inclusion, love, wisdom, and laughter

with an intimacy of private and personal family connection. Kookaburra told Cathy that she was going to engage in a story of love and a laughing sister by showing up on the morning of our scheduled time together; Kookaburra gave permission to share the story.

      Story reflections. When I sent this story to Cathy, I had titled it "This is the Story of Two Sisters, Cathy and Natasha – Love and a Laughing Sister." These dynamic experiences of love and laughter emerged strongly from the relational story of these two sisters.

      Cathy placed herself in the role of ensuring the continuation of the living stories of Natasha's life for Natasha's adult children and their children, as well as for Cathy's adult children and her grandchildren. The story that Cathy shared with me contained interwoven stories of family, children, parents, aunts, siblings, and yet-to-be-born babies. Originally, I considered the idea of Cathy as the keeper of memories, but it somehow did not fit. I began to recognize that this aspect of Cathy's story was her sharing about the footprint of her family. This was more than memories. It was not reminiscences or simply recollections; there was an aliveness to this experience. It was verbal and emotional, funny, sad, and lonely. Cathy's story contained a knowledge about the intimacy in experiencing

death and grief. The story of two sisters and the lived experience after the physical death of Natasha was relational in its orientation.

Cathy referred to a poem (see Appendix E) that had been written in the Victorian era regarding the grief of Queen Victoria upon the death of her beloved husband Prince Albert. I was curious as to the influence of language in this era that made an impression on Cathy. I wondered if it was the way in which words are used or if there were other ways to communicate about grief and death.

Cathy's reflections. Cathy sent an email to me later in the day after we shared the conversation. She wrote,

> Hi Deb, I just wanted you to know that our talk was very
> comforting for me. I feel Natasha would be honoured to be part of
> the study and I'm honoured to be a participant. I know that you
> will make a very special contribution to the literature about this
> kind of grief. (Cathy)

Several months later, I sent Cathy a copy of the story that I had written about her story. This was her response to the retold story of her lived grief experience:

> It was very special reading about my relationship with my sister-
> you have done a beautiful job of this. Love the words from

Tennyson's poem you have included and the connection with

laughter, love and the kookaburra. I have however made a few

small amendments. I may share your lovely words with others in

the family so some of my amendments are just to ensure it's duly

respectful to all. (Cathy)

Edward

How we met. Several years ago, I had the privilege of working in

the same area as Edward's partner, Alice. I came to value and greatly

appreciate her as a colleague and friend. As a past colleague, she was on

my contact list as I began to seek people to participate in my inquiry

project. I was surprised when I got a message back from her that her

husband, Edward, wanted to participate in this project and would share

his story with me.

My initial conversation with Edward explored the criteria format

and discussed the informed consent. We decided that Edward did meet

the criteria, and he signed the consent form. Edward shared that he was

just turning 60 years of age when his older brother Brian had died. Our

shared conversation took place on February 13, 2014.

In Chapter 3, I have identified that two of the original audiotaped

conversations had not recorded. One of the lost conversations was with

Edward. I connected with Edward via email to explain that our

conversation had not recorded, and I wondered if he would consider

having a second conversation with me. He was very quick in responding

to me and stated that he would engage in another conversation.

What was interesting about the second conversation was that there

was a distinct difference for Edward and for myself as the listener in the

second conversation. The details and the story did not change from the

first conversation, which took place in February 2014; however, the

backdrop and context of Edward's emotional story was present in the

second conversation. As Edward shared his story, I found myself having

a different emotional response. Following is the extract from my journal.

I have had a deep emotional response to this interview with

Edward. I found myself holding my breath at moments during our

time together and I needed to debrief myself when we completed

our time together. He had shared with me how "I had moped

around, it was very emotional for a couple of days" and "I have to

admit I was not looking forward to having this conversation with

you today". Edward identified that "I'm more emotionally

attached to this conversation" (March 18, 2014). My initial

response was to explore this experience by clarifying that he was

not under any obligation to have this second conversation with

me, which I did. I have heard his emotion and I have felt my own

corresponding story of emotion. My story is one of being an

inquirer and not being the cause of adding difficult emotions.

(personal field journal)

Edward stated that he wanted to continue with talking to me. He

described how he had found it to be different than "talking with my

family" and how my questions had "made me know things differently"

(Edward). I came to understand that although this was not a welcomed

experience for Edward, he was committed to participating in the sharing

of sibling grief. His story of grief was more emotional than he had first

anticipated. Further into the conversation, Edward identified that he

"wanted to make sure that you [Deb, as inquirer] got what you needed for

this project." As we closed this interview, Edward stated the following:

"And in all sincerity, if anything comes up and you think . . . you know,

you want to discuss it again, then give me a couple of weeks and that . . .

and we'll do it again."

I recognized the depth of our collaborative experience. Edward

was also invested in bringing life to this project, which once again moved

my dissertation story into recognizing that this had become a

collaborative and open story.

The footprint of the family. This is a group theme that emerged

from the story shared by Edward. He identified the members of his

family of origin by beginning with the sibling system. There were six

children born to the original family system. I had asked Edward for

clarification about his brother who had died. Edward ensured that I had

clear information as to the sibling system in his family of origin before he

began to tell details of his relationship with Gregory. E is Edward

(conversational partner) and D is Deb (inquirer):

> E: You mean the younger of the two?

> D: Yeah, I didn't get that written down the first time we talked.

> E: Well . . . he was 31 when he drowned. And I was 27.

> D: Okay.

> E: His name was Gregory.

> D: Gregory. [I repeated it to ensure I had his name correct.]

> E: He was number three of six children. [Pause]

> D: Okay, he was number three of six children.

> E: It went boy, girl, boy, girl, boy, and then my younger brother

> came along and spoiled the rotation. (Edward)

In this excerpt, I had clarified with Edward the identity of the first brother (Gregory) who had died in the sibling system, when Edward was younger. The following is focussed on Brian who was the older brother who had died recently.

Edward had shared earlier in the story that his brother Gregory had died when they were both in their twenties. The story continues with Edward sharing about the recent death of his brother Brian. Edward was just coming onto his sixtieth year when his eldest brother, Brian, died from cancer at the age of 69. Edward reported that Brian lived for 14 months after his diagnosis and "that we got to know each other better." Brian was the eldest in the family and had the position of big brother. Edward shared stories about Brian that identified Brian's sense of humour and capacity in bringing laughter into the lives of others. His siblings referred to him as a "the teaser."

Edward explained that at one time during their adult lives, he and his wife owned a farm that had apple trees on it. In this story, Edward shared that one autumn the "whole family showed up to pick apples," and Edward had taken a black and white picture of Brian "up a ladder, picking apples." After Brian's death, his widow had reprinted this picture, framed it, and given it to Brian's siblings. Edward reported that

he had recently gone to visit Gregory's widow and together they had

found a picture of Gregory and he had that picture reprinted. Edward

placed each of the pictures in identical frames and has them displayed in

his home. Edward said sadly that it had "brought back a lot of

memories." As Edward articulated his story, he identified that "I've been

thinking about those all day."

Unexpected story. This is a unique theme to the story told by

Edward. I had had no prior indication that there would be a different

story of sibling grief when Edward and I had agreed to become

conversational partners.

The unexpected story entered the grief story that Edward was

sharing about his experience with the introduction of the death of his

brother Gregory 35 years earlier. His brother Gregory drowned in a scuba

diving accident at the age of 31. Gregory was the third eldest of the six

children. Edward was 27 years old when this tragedy occurred. Gregory

was married with two small children at the time of his death. Gregory's

death was a life catalyst for Edward. His death created a story where the

trouble moved as tragedy and as influence for life evaluation for Edward.

Edward shared his change in self-perception upon the death of Gregory.

Ummm, what am I looking for here, just the way you conduct

your life. Just to say it's more than just me now, I'm a family of

four and it made me think about things that made me do things.

. . . Maybe it made me grow up, I guess. To what it was instead of

being a good time Joe, you know with two small kids, ummm the

reality was that I had serious responsibilities now. And that's

when we decided to start putting money away, bought our first

home, you know. I wouldn't say it was direct result of but had a

bearing on what happened to my brother.

The significance of the tragedy becomes clearer when Edward

shared the impact of Gregory's death. Gregory and his wife had sold their

house on a Friday and were in the process of finalizing papers for the

purchase of their new house on Monday. Gregory died on the Sunday

before the new mortgage papers were signed, and consequently, his wife

and children had no place to move into, and there was no mortgage

insurance that would have paid off the remaining debt on the house.

In this aspect of Edward's story, the description of change that

captures the intensity of this background story of grief knowledge is

identified in the idea that "I'm a family of four." He is referring to his

family of present, which included his wife and two children. There is a

transformative moment in which individual self moves into self-identification of belonging and a desire to respond to the family unit of his choice. This moment in this story also signifies the bridging of connection from family of origin to a family of present for Edward.

     Lost opportunities. As a unique theme, Edward created this title himself and utilized it numerous times as an introduction into different aspects of his lived experience of bereavement. It holds a poignancy that contains the experience of unspoken emotion for Edward. As I listened to "lost opportunities," I began to sense a depth of sadness, loneliness, and regret in this story that had a stronger presence of feeling than what was being verbalized.

     The idea of lost opportunities became a title for Edward as he shared his experience of grief and the story articulated what it meant for him. Lost opportunities were a strong presence in the story told by Edward. Edward suggested that lost opportunities was about being" cheated, deprived" and "missed out on," which was specifically about his brother Gregory. The story of grief that involved his relationship with Gregory was began with Edward's introduction that when he and his wife, Alice, were both in university, they stayed with Gregory and his family whenever they went home.

Edward said, "We're just getting to know each other and that goes for Alice as well. We had so much fun together and it's all just all cut so short." Edward then went on to tell about his continued connection with his sister in law (Gregory's widow) and his two nieces.

The story shifted to talk about the more recent experiences of sharing time with Brian, the second and older brother who had died. Edward reported that he upon his retirement, he and Alice had made the decision to return to their home town. Edward and Alice lived with Brian and his wife for several months, which provided them with the opportunity to renew their relationship. Edward reflected again on lost opportunities while talking about the dynamics of his relationship with Brian and musing that each of them had raised families, worked hard, and were not geographically close in their adult years, until Edward retired. This aspect of the story revealed that regret of not making a different effort and being closer during those busy adult years. I asked Edward about lost opportunities:

D: Have you thought about anymore since you and I talked? And what else could we be talking about under lost opportunities. What do you know about that? Or felt?

E: This is now . . . My older brother Brian, I think . . . I think after he was diagnosed he lived for 14 months or so. We spent a lot of time together as I related to you, before we came home. Alice [Edward's wife] and I, we hadn't a place to live. We were still looking for a place and he [Brian] and his wife put us up, so spent several months at different times with them, which allowed us to renew the acquaintances . . . or more to the point, I guess allow us to get to know each other better. And ummm that puts us back onto the lost opportunity that we didn't do before; but again, not to feel sorry for ourselves. They raised two children, we raised two children, and we lived in different cities, ahhh, different friends, different age group and things like that but . . . Just as you say reflecting back on it, you know . . . Would have been so much more fun, or so much more involved. It's right now with just the four of us left ahhh,we make it a point to ahh spend more time with each other's company . . . and just do things together, which we always did. But I think more emphasis on it now . . . that just the four of us are left. Is to take time and do these things.

(Edward)

When Edward utilized the phrase "not to feel sorry for ourselves," I became aware that I needed to pay attention to how certain words were grouped together accompanied by a sharp intake of breath, an audible sniff, or a deep pause. My experience in being a conversational partner with Edward suggested that the story I had just heard described had another link to grief in it, and I have identified it as an emotional bracket.

Further into the story, Edward brought the idea of reconciling himself to the depth of the lost opportunities, which recognized his changing capacity when he stated, "I can't change the past, but ummm I can remember it . . . may be too short of a word . . . but cherish, cherish the time we did have together."

Edward's story continued with the experiences that were considered positive.

On grief and death. In Edward's story, he used the phrase "not to feel sorry for myself" several times, and each time it was an introduction to powerful reflections on the depth of grief experience in his relationship with both of his brothers who had died, Brian, most recently and brother Gregory, 30 years ago. Edward shared,

And the thing you know, not to feel sorry for myself, because I do

feel sorry for myself, but uhhh, I guess you kinda look back at

that . . . and in your life, could you have done something more to .

. . you know to develop those relationships to spend more time

and enjoy their . . . you know . . . enjoy my siblings more. Enjoy

the company and the things they had to offer. And umm, not to

sound poetic but you know obviously, they enriched my life, our

lives, and ummm, it just didn't feel like it was enough time.

Edward continued with his reflection in regard to "not to feel

sorry for myself" by explaining that "well, it's a feeling, that . . . you

know . . . I've been deprived of." This was enhanced in his identification

of his relationship with Gregory.

Especially with Gregory. Like ummm we were just getting to

know him better, and he had small children. We had a child at the

time, when he died. Two actually . . . We were sharing more and

more things in common, and umm . . . things that we were able to

do together. (Edward)

In Edward's description of his grief with his brother Brian, he

reflected that it is a "bigger loss with Brian as we did get 30 years more

with him than with Gregory." Edward described his time spent with

Brian: "It seems it slowed down after a while and we had the opportunity

to spend time together." The length of years that Edward described in this

statement speaks to the significance of time spent with a sibling. In this grief story, Edward recognized the absence of Gregory from his sibling life as Gregory had died several decades earlier. The experience that Edward had with his brother Brian is reflected in the acknowledgement of "opportunity" to have an active relational experience together.

Edward continued in his story of Brian and told a transecting experience of Brian's grief when his son died in 1998 and how the family as a whole "became closer after that."

The length of relationship and shared life stories brought forth the focus of the relational strength for these brothers. Once again, the story of grief took on an active role with the remaining four siblings. Edward spoke about how each of them make the effort to spend time together and have become closer as a family, incorporating all members, which include the widows, adult children, and grandchildren.

Holding connection. This is a group theme and is the special story that Edward shared with me. Edward shared a family of origin story involving Brian. Their mother had given Brian money to buy presents for his younger siblings for Christmas. It was several years later that the siblings figured out that

on that Christmas morning, we had all gotten a blue and white

striped ball, and Brian had kept the rest of the money . . . it speaks

volumes about him, you know. Giving 20 bucks back in 1950

whenever, then spending $1.50 and pocketing the other $18.50

and laughing to himself, you know that's typical, that's the way I

remember him.

This story was a great source of humour and teasing for Brian and

his siblings over the years. Edward continued sharing that on the "first

Christmas after Brian had died, I got a Christmas present from him, and I

opened it up and it was the ball." Edward was laughing as he shared

about this gift from Brian. Alice, Edward's wife, asked if she could take

the phone from Edward, and he said "Yes" to her, at which time Alice

came on the telephone and spoke with me. Alice shared with laughter in

her voice, "Deb, he is bouncing the ball as he talks to you, the one he

got."

The ball as a physical form was the link between different stories

that metamorphosed into the current grief story. The ball first made its

appearance as a present on a Christmas morning to a young group of

siblings. Years later, the ball reappeared as an object that moved into a

story of humour in the shared sibling experience as they teased their older

brother Brian about the balls. They had eventually figured out that on his

journey to buy his younger sibling Christmas gifts, Brian had spent a few

dollars on the presents and kept the change given to him by their mother.

As a lasting gift from Brian, he preplanned a final Christmas

present from him for each of his siblings. It seems that the message for

each of them was in the form of the ball, which presented the life long

story of family history, humour, and love. The ball is an important link of

holding connection for both Edward and Alice. With the laughter in her

voice and her desire to share this aspect of the story, Alice reflected her

connection to the ball with Brian. Engaging with Alice and sharing an

intimate emotional memory with her about her brother in law and about

the connection for her husband, Edward, brought out a limitation to this

project—that being that partners of grieving siblings also have grief

stories that intersect with the sibling who died.

Story reflections. The first shared conversation involved the

details and facts of the story. As the listener to this lived story, the

emotion unfolded by the storyteller made it a different story for the

listener. I listened and I felt the story of grief, which pointed to the

locations of the emotional field that now accompanied the relational

dynamic in this story of grief. Edward's capacity to fully disclose his

authentic self with me, the listener, as the story came forth was a gift for this sibling grief project.

Each of the brothers who had died had a strong voice in the sharing of their stories. These stories provided a context of relationship from Edward and about Edward. The relational dynamics of caring between these brothers is alive in the story told by Edward the storyteller.

The story of difference came to light in our second conversation as Edward shared that he had been thinking about our first conversation. He spoke to the influence of the difference by pondering the recognition of having "had opportunities" with "those memories" and "that they will always stay with me, and I can take a little satisfaction with me, that I have them" (Edward). This experience of change in the story clearly identifies that there is never a final version. In addition, in a grief story changes contain insight, and meaning.

During the time I spent with Edward and listening to the audio recording of our shared time together, I became aware of my voice identifying the deep sorrow that was linked to laughter or humour in Edwards' story. I found myself rereading a poem from Kahlil Gibran, "On Joy and Sorrow" (1923/1971). In the retold story that I sent to Edward, I included Gibran's writing (see Appendix E).

In Edward's story, he told of the relationship he had with each of his brothers who had died. The dominant emotions expressed in his story were compatible with knowing all aspects of joy and sorrow. The story of grief in his relationship with his older brother Brian was strong in identifying the humour and laughter that his brother Brian brought into his relationships with his family. This was identified and held a strong value throughout the telling of Edward's story. Edward identified the absence of Brian from his life with the identification of the absence of humour and laughter in his poignant retelling of his own lived experiences.

As Edward shared his story with me, there were moments when he would identify humour followed by an emotional pause, recognizable by the audible sniffles, or ragged style of breathing. When Edward shared his experience and description of lost opportunities verbally, it was also accompanied by an audible emotionally felt lived experience as he told his story. Edward's story of grief held the intense experience of various emotions and interconnected narratives that spanned his life story and as his life continues to unfold.

Edward's reflections. I sent the story that I had written to Edward via email and asked if he would like to read it. He stated that yes,

he would read it. I asked him to provide me with any comments or

concerns. Following is Edward's response to me.

Your details hit quite home for me. . . .

I had the good fortune to have my sister Marlow [name

changed] and family home in Nova Scotia this summer, which

allowed the four remaining siblings an opportunity to be together

on numerous occasions. . . .

I have to share that naturally our discussions brought us

around to our deceased brothers and again it brought up only fond

memories and lots of laughs for us all. Marlow's sons are quite a

bit younger than their cousins and did not know Brian all that well

and Gregory was known only in reference as a lost uncle. The

boys enjoyed the stories of their uncles' exploits through the

family makeup and trials and tribulations of growing up in a large

family of eight. Not to mention the numerous relatives from both

of our parents who made up the family dynamics/interactions with

all of us in small town Nova Scotia. . . .

Telling our stories made the loss of both brothers hard on

myself but, laughs and smiles from all especially my younger

nephews highlighted the positive impact both had on me

personally and probably professionally. Sad for a bit but, only for

a bit as the memories are good and here forever. . . .

I have nothing to add to your paper. . . . Thanks for

bringing back the memories. (Edward)

Marlow

How we met. How Marlow and I met is an interesting story unto

itself. Marlow is a sister to Edward, who was one of my first

conversational partners in this inquiry. Edward had shared with Marlow

about his participation in this inquiry. Marlow took it upon herself to

request inclusion as a conversational partner in this project. I received an

email from Alice who is Edward's partner, informing me that her sister-

in-law, Marlow, was interested in talking with me about her experience

with sibling grief. Marlow had asked Alice to contact me and to ask if she

[Marlow] could participate. I responded affirmatively and sent her an

email outlining the sibling grief inquiry project with the criteria for

participation. Marlow responded and shared that she had had several

conversations with her brother Edward in regard to the sibling grief

project, what it was like to participate, and how it had been for him.

Marlow met all the criteria and signed the informed consent. Our shared

conversation took place in May of 2014.

Although Marlow and I were unknown to each other, I knew that Marlow knew about me and not only through my earlier participation with her brother Edward but also through the professional relationship that I had with her sister in law Alice. What was different in this story for me was the fact there were now two siblings from the same family of origin participating in the inquiry. I began to wonder what Marlow would share with me that might be different from what Edward had identified in his story and what if anything would be similar in the grief stories shared.

I began our time together story by asking Marlow what she wanted to know about my inquiry. Following is an extract from the transcribed conversation. M is Marlow (conversational partner) and D is Deb (inquirer):

D: So Marlow, you are aware of the project that I am doing and—
[Marlow interrupts me].

M: Well, you can give me some details. Alice spoke very briefly that you were doing a thesis on sibling deaths or something, along the that line.

D: Yes, I am. [Marlow quickly jumps in.]

M: The reason that I [am] interested in doing it was number one, because Edward did it. And number two because I was, you

know, having some difficulty with . . . ummm the recent death of

my brother, and I thought you know, maybe questions would

tweak something for me, you know.

D: Okay.

M: That's why I said to [husband's name omitted]," I'd certainly

like to do it. And umm probably a good time to do it right now, to

be doing it, and not a couple of months ago."

D: Well that's excellent then. (Marlow)

Marlow identified three reasons as to why she wanted to share her

story of grief. Each of the reasons had interconnected stories. As I wrote

this statement, I began to consider how and what Edward shared in his

story of involvement in the inquiry. Perhaps his experience included a

sense of shared story, a different aspect of grief as a brother, and what it

was like to experience me as both a listener and teller of his, now our,

story. Marlow was prepared to participate in our time together. She

alluded to this when she stated that she was "having some difficulty with

. . . the recent death of her brother" and that "maybe questions would

tweak something for me." The third reason that she expressed was in the

timing of sharing her story. She related that she had said to her husband

that "probably a good thing to do it now . . . and not a couple of months ago."

Initially, I wanted to follow this statement and ask why this was a good time and why it was "not a good time a few months ago". I would have continued with wondering what had been happening for Marlow. This was the first time in my conversations that I recognized a slight variance in the difference between being a clinician and being an inquirer. I chose to stay on focus as a conversational partner, and I acknowledged her comments in an easy way. I said, "Well, that's excellent then."

In the first five minutes of this shared time together, we spent it creating a relationship and sharing multiple story lines about other relationships that were significant for Marlow. As we moved into our time together, I asked Marlow to clarify the date of her brother Brian's death. Marlow checked in with me about her level of emotionality. I could hear her take in a deep breath, and I knew she was crying. She shared the following:

> M: You know, it's funny . . . you know, I can talk about this and
>
> talk about it and talk about it and . . . you know not get emotional

. . . and just telling you . . . the year, has started the tears going.

Crazy, as long as you can bear with me.

D: I am absolutely with you.

M: Okay. (Marlow)

Marlow explored my level of participation with her as she began

her story of grief, and she identified her level of authenticity in audibly

allowing me to have knowledge of her emotional self. I felt a connection

in sharing this time with Marlow. I was deeply honoured at her

authenticity with me.

The footprint of the family. This is a group theme. Marlow

began her story by asking if she was supposed to talk about one brother

or two brothers. It was an excellent question as I had identified that one

of the inclusion criteria that the sibling who shared had to be 60 years

old; however, I had not identified a criterion of maximum years out from

the death. I had placed the criterion on the project that stated a sibling had

to be at least six months out from the death. As an example, I could have

specified that the death had been within 5 years or that the sibling who

had died also had to have been at least 60 years old. It was apparent by

Marlow's question that she had experienced two sibling deaths. I chose to

recognize and honour that two deaths were intertwined in her story of

grief. I also had previous knowledge of the death of two siblings in this

family of origin as I had already shared conversations with Marlow's

brother Edward. I confirmed that I would like to share her experience of

her story about both brothers who had died.

Marlow reported that she was 62 years old when her older brother

Brian died of cancer at the age of 69 years. Marlow was 63 years old at

the time of our conversation. Marlow chose to start with her story

focussed on Gregory, who was the first of this sibling system to die.

Marlow stated that she was 29 years old when her brother

Gregory died in a "tragic scuba diving accident." Gregory was 31 years

old at the time of his death. Gregory's death occurred in June 1979. He

was survived by two young children and a wife.

There were six children born into this family of origin, with Brian

being the first born before their father went overseas. A sister for Brian

was born when their father came home from overseas, followed a year

later by Gregory, and then three more children over the years, including

Marlow. Gregory and Brian are the brothers who have died.

Marlow told of being a family that was known for their humour

and their ability to create connections with one another through laughter.

When Marlow spoke of her family of origin and she used the word

family, she was specifically referring to her siblings. The context of this

sibling family was friendship built over time. Marlow described this time:

> Well, I think that as a family we were very close, ummm not
>
> necessarily as children but when we got into our later teens and
>
> early twenties. Then my sister and I bought a cottage and it
>
> became the hangout for the brothers and friends and everything.
>
> We started to spend a lot of time together to socialize, to party, to
>
> whatever. So, I think when we were in our late teens, early
>
> twenties that's when as siblings we all became very friendly.
>
> (Marlow)

Marlow reported on her puzzlement as to the troubled relationship

between her mother and her brother Gregory. Marlow described her

brother Gregory as a "street angel and house devil." Marlow said that

"everybody loved Gregory, but at home he was difficult, he had a

difficult time and mother was hard on him."

Later on, in her story, Marlow described how she did not

understand their mother's relationship with Gregory. She shared that as

she grew older, she began to recognize how difficult life must have been

for her mother who was raising six children. Marlow talked about the

difference in relationship that her older brother Brian had with their

mother. Marlow shared that Brian's explanation as to why he was closer

to their mother was that there was a time when he was the only child and

that he and his mother were the ones "who went through the war years

together." Their life changed when the war ended, and as Marlow said,

"Father came home and all these kid[s] started coming."

On knowing death and grief. Marlow is familiar with the death

of people close to her. In the telling of her sibling grief story, Marlow

talked about the multiple deaths that had occurred for this

intergenerational family and identified the death of her two brothers, a

nephew, as well as both her parents.

Marlow described the earlier drowning death in 1979 of her

brother Gregory. He was the third child born to the family:

> It was . . . umm the worst experience of our lives, and I learned a
>
> lot through that. I learnt that people grieve very differently. I
>
> learned how much my sister and I had in common. And . . . you
>
> know what, I never saw my mother cry and I'm sure she did. His
>
> death was the shock and it was his age and it was his two young
>
> children left behind. (Marlow)

Marlow identified coming to understand the different experience of how her siblings grieved the death of their brother Gregory and related the following:

> My brother Brian was angry, he was just so angry and he wouldn't stay in the room if we started to talk" and my youngest brother just put himself in his bedroom and shut the door and just wouldn't deal with it, couldn't deal with it. . . . Edward was away, so I have no idea how he dealt with it. . . . For me and my sister, we were exactly the same and we were together at the cottage. And that made it easier because we'd talk, talk, talk talked, you know. (Marlow)

Marlow shared that when she was younger, she was "terrified of death and dying" and had trouble sleeping "for fear, I wouldn't wake up the next morning and I was going to die." Marlow continued by identifying that they had been raised as Catholic and educated by nuns who "put hell fire and brimstone in your mind." She identified that this changed for her after Gregory died and "it went away." Marlow no longer feared the hell she had imagined.

Marlow shared that she was with Brian at the time of his death, along with his wife, daughter, and Marlow's husband. Marlow described

the moment of Brian's death. Following is the excerpt from the

transcript:

> M: He just stopped breathing and slipped away. But I was there
>
> when his son Jay died and I was there when my mother died.
>
> D: Ummmm.
>
> M: So, it's getting to be a common occurrence.
>
> D: So, what do you think of that?
>
> M: I'm glad to be there. Ummm I don't why, just a . . . I don't
>
> know a sense of relief that it's over for them, but they're not
>
> struggling. (Marlow)

The stories of Marlow's experience with her nephew and her

mother came out at the same time as Marlow described Brian's death.

This is an interlocking of narratives that hold the storied experience. The

connection of death is the story line. This is Marlow's story of supporting

people she loves.

Marlow continued by sharing that the physician had told them

that Brian could hear even while he was in a coma. Marlow laughed and

said, "We talked and at times got hysterical laughing at things we were

doing, and what his reaction would be if he could talk to us." Further into

her story, Marlow explored her story of grieving in relation to her

experience of witnessing the people who attended Brian's' funeral:

> and all the stories that people had to tell, and the strong
>
> friendships he had, and . . . you know grieving is for the living.
>
> The grieving is for the living, not the dying, the dead. Because
>
> when people come to the funeral and things like that; they share
>
> these stories with you and they . . . and you realize that . . . you
>
> know he's had this history with these people, he goes back 68
>
> years or 65 years with these people. And it's just wonderful. It's
>
> ah, it's nice to know that so many people thought so highly of
>
> him. And they waited an hour to get into the funeral home.
>
> (Marlow)

Becoming a sibling orphan. Marlow shared that Brian had

always been available to listen to her, to provide support, and to problem

solve life concerns. When she spoke again, an intensity of emotion

accompanied her story. I could hear her tears and quickened breathing.

Listening to her sadness made it feel as if she was in the room with me.

We were sitting thousands of kilometres apart. I had a resonating sense of

empathy for her sadness in my being. I knew that my experience of

resonation came from my sibling grief experience. I did not acknowledge
my experience in the moment. Marlow carried on:

> This has been a thing all my life, ummm Brian was always there,
> he was my big brother. I could always go to him and I think,
> that's part of the reason that I'm feeling as much of an orphan as I
> did, when I lost my parents.

> Marlow reflected that when Brian died, her sense of family

changed as well. This moment of sharing was a bigger experience for
Marlow than just a sharing a story. Marlow continued by reflecting that
she had never given voice to her sense "of loss" or "of family loss." In
many ways, the loss of her family, as she knew it, was a bigger loss than
the death of Brian.

> Marlow identified that the other members of this sibling group are

each having their own difficulties with Brian's death and with their own
current life challenges. She reported that she knows that "when things are
sorted out and whatever it will come back"; the "it" identified is the
involvement of sibling family relationships.

> **Tragedy as the catalyst for change.** The experience of the death

of Marlow's older brother Gregory when she was 29 years old became a
significant catalyst for change in the story of Marlow's life. It was the

trouble that Frank (2010) identified as "something that precipitates

action" (p. 203). In Marlow's words, she explained,

> I wanted to get away, I didn't want to be there anymore. . . . I
>
> ended up transferring to [a large city, several provinces away] on
>
> what was supposed to be a five-year plan and never went back. I
>
> wanted to be anonymous. . . . But, then I felt that what I was
>
> doing was creating my own life, you know, nobody here knew
>
> that I was Brian's sister or Gregory's sister, or so and so's
>
> daughter. (Marlow)

However, as Marlow identified, she wanted to "get away" and she

wanted to be unknown. Her sense of where she belonged in the family

story shifted to include the possibility of others, strangers, and a desire to

find herself and make a life away from the pain of familiarity. She

situated herself in a new city and a new province, with a format of

familiar employment as she took a transfer within the company. The

geographical move supported a transmutation of herself in her life story.

As Marlow continued with her story, she stated,

> It was just my day to day life that was my own . . . as I brought it
>
> all with me. They all came to visit on a regular basis. . . . I went
>
> home on a regular basis . . . they've been back and forth, back and

forth, back and forth and then the next generation has been back and forth and back and forth.

Marlow identified that both she and her younger sister deliberately created relationships with their young nieces after their brother Gregory died. Marlow stated that every year both she and her sister drove to where their nieces lived. The visits have continued over the decades and as Marlow described, "It gives us the time to be there with the kids, and these are my brother Gregory who died in '79, these are his children and his grandchildren." She continued with a rich description of these relationships by sharing the following:

> And it gives [omitted name of sister] and I a real relationship with these kids, you know . . . like they know us, even though they live far away and everything, they know us. They know who we are, they talk about us when we're gone, they have a great time with us. . . . We have such a good time with them. And that means the world to us, because they are Gregory's children, grandchildren. (Marlow)

The family of origin and the continued presence of her siblings in her life speaks to the depth of connection and commitment these family members have for one another. There is a strong background of loyalty

and valuing of each other. By engaging in a geographical move, Marlow

achieved a life that belonged to her, and she was able to create her family

of present with the strong roots in her family of origin.

      Holding connection. Marlow described her older brother Brian as

"the oldest, the one who always . . . the leveller, the great calming

influence, he's not here anymore." Holding connection is a theme that

Marlow returned to often in her telling of her story. The theme of holding

connection for this grieving sibling consisted of strong emotional

connection that was found in the relationship and formed from relational

experiences. In holding connection, Marlow identified that

> You know when Brian was dying, it occurred to me that he was a
>
> terrific big brother and that I had never told him that. So I told
>
> him, I wanted him to know because he was. He was the silent type
>
> but he was always there for you, would do anything you asked
>
> him to do . . . umm always had your back . . . it was the same
>
> when we became friends and started hanging out together, like he
>
> was so funny, and we had such good times and we laughed a lot,
>
> you know as a family as a group of us all together. (Marlow)

      Marlow identified the level of connection that she had in her

relationship with Brian by sharing the stories of the difficult and tragic

experiences that she and Brian shared together. The first strong

experience was the tragic death of their brother Gregory. The tragedy was

that he was young, and he left behind a wife with two small children.

Marlow was able to verbalize her experiences, feelings, and memories

with her sister. Brian became silent and angry in his silence. The silence

became the voice of his grief story. Marlow had reported that she was

very aware of how this death had impacted Brian, even as he was silent.

      The second tragic experience that Marlow shared with Brian was

the death of his son, Jay. Jay had been diagnosed with cancer, and Brian

turned to Marlow to ask for her assistance with getting him into a

specialist. The specialist was in the city where Marlow resided. Marlow

shared that when her nephew, Jay, was finally admitted to the hospital

with a terminal diagnosis, Brian and his family as well as Jay's girlfriend

lived in her home. During this time, Brian and his daughter had decided

to fly to their home, which was several provinces away and drive their

vehicle back to Marlow's. This left Nina, who was Jays' mom, and Jay's

girlfriend with Marlow. It became a difficult time in the story as Marlow

shared the following account:

      While they were home, Jay died and I was with Nina and Jay

      when he died and ummm she was very emotional and everything.

I was able to take the phone and and you know, tell Brian what
happened, how it happened and you know stuff like that. So I
guess that might have been a real bond between us. (Marlow)

Marlow continued her story in telling the details of not sleeping
that night and that Nina and Jay's girlfriend left on an early morning
flight and went home. It was Marlow who stayed with her nephew, Jay,
and then flew home with his body. She shared the details:

I flew home with the body and then the hearse came and picked
up the body. And I can still . . . [pause] and all the family was at
Brian's' house and we came around the corner of the back door
and he was standing in the doorway with the light, the backlight
lite behind him. When I pulled in and . . . it was the most, it was
the saddest thing I ever saw in all my life. (Marlow)

Marlow shared that when she went into Brian's house, she said to Brian,
"He's home," and then she went into the house. Marlow shared with me
that she "was glad I was able to do it."

In the grief story that Marlow shared, she articulated the dynamic
of her older brother Brian as being the calm leveller in the experiences in
her life.

Story reflections. There are several voices that have unheard stories intersecting in the main story of lived experience with Marlow. There is the voice of her father who brought in the story of tragedy to explain the experience of Gregory's funeral. The funeral was the outward symbol of a tragedy that members of this family were almost not able to speak of. The difference for Marlow was in her identification that at Brian's funeral, people were lined up prior to its commencement.

> Same thing happened when Gregory died, they were lined up
>
> outside for hours. My father used to say, my father said it was
>
> because people flock to a tragedy and everyone is so damn glad
>
> it's not them . . . But Brian was 69 and you know he had one pile
>
> of people wanting to pay their respects. (Marlow)

There is the voice of Brian who was speechless at the untimely death of a younger brother and decades later of his own son. Marlow reported on the caring nature that Brian brought into his relationships with his siblings and with others. I wonder if Brian would have also reported on the strong support and love he received from Marlow. The story of shared difficult times that Marlow identified Brian was a part of did not have Brian's voice in that he might have spoken about how much Marlow meant to him. Brian's story would have included the

acknowledgement that Marlow was as dependable, competent, and as funny as he was in life. Brian came to her with the very difficult times of his son's terminal illness.

Marlow had identified that humour was a strong connection between these siblings. To appreciate and share humour it is necessary to understand humour. In this family system, the siblings created and shared humour. Marlow shared a moment of laughter when she reported that early in their lives, the family had teased Brian about his short "brush cut." Marlow and Brian were out somewhere when a girl passed them; as Marlow described the girl, "she had a crewcut." At this point Brian turned to Marlow and said, "I told you it would come back one day, I just didn't think it would be on women." Marlow was laughing as she reported on this experience with Brian. The lived story of grief for Marlow has corresponding stories of humour and tragedy that are interwoven in the main fabric of her life.

In the telling of her grief in the story of Brian, Marlow was focused on the relationship between the two of them. Throughout our shared time together, she articulated her dilemma of wanting to find resolution for the trouble that was hidden from her immediate understanding of her emotional and psychological responses to Brian's

death. In one of her observations regarding her relationship with Brian,

Marlow stated, "So I guess we did have history . . . from the time I was a

teenager right on through he was there for me."

Marlow was surprised that she and Brian had a lived history

together. Perhaps this surprise came from the way Marlow shared her

grief story. She narrated and thought about her grief from the perspective

of how it had been Brian who had continually been a support to her. She

did not narrate nor acknowledge how she had supported Brian. As she

shared this time with me as a conversational partner, I heard the intensity

of her lived experience of grief. The grief is that Brian is no longer there

for her in the way she was familiar. Her life is different.

External dominant meta narrative. As I listened to the story of

Marlow's lived experience, I began to be curious when she identified that

she had a fear of death because death was the inevitable entrance to a

permanent status of "hell." As I searched for a narrative resource that

would provide background information and broaden my understanding of

this powerful life description of hell, I located an article from The New

York Times. The article was published on September 18 in 1999. The

author, Gustave Niebuhr researched the progression of the concept of

hell. The article is titled "Hell is Getting a Makeover from Catholics;

Jesuits Call It a Painful State but Not a Sulfurous Place." Niebuhr

explored the construction of Hell and identified the combined influence

of art, literature, music, architecture, and the religious doctrine of

Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism in the middle ages as being the

purveyors of dominant influence. In the 14th century, Dante's epic work

chronicled a richly described and imagined journey to a place identified

as hell. The visual arts, music written as hymns, and liturgy, as well as

the decorative structures of architecture provided a performative medium

that confirmed the existence of hell as a location and depicted how

inhabitants of hell were seen (Niebuhr, 1999). Niebuhr (1999) described

the depiction of hell from the work of a 15th century artist as "a tableau

of violence and excruciating tortures" (p. 1). Niebuhr went on to report

that it was in the early 1960s according to a professor of Theology, Sister

Elizabeth Johnson, that the Catholic teachings began to change from "fire

and brimstone preaching [to teachings of] God's love rather than God's

wrath "(1999, p. 2.). Interestingly the author quoted philosopher Rev.

Joseph Koterski, who stated, "Traditional ideas of hell exist as

unexamined background images that they carry with along with a general

fear of the unknown" (Niebuhr, 1999, p. 3).

As I read Niebuhr's (1999) article, I pondered how strong a dominant publicly held narrative was when in the mind and being of a young innocent child. The child grows up being afraid to sleep and being afraid of death. For Marlow, it seemed that the realization of inherent goodness and total belief in her brother Gregory was what shifted the belief in the concept of hell that Marlow had carried for decades. It was striking for me to hear that the unspoken love and belief in her sibling and his death was what freed Marlow from this dominant story of fear.

Marlow's reflections. Following are the comments that Marlow sent to me after she had read the story that I had written in retelling her story of grief:

> Deb, I just have a few comments. . . . I did not recognize my speech patterns so that was beneficial to me. Lastly, I cried so hard reading "my story" that I could hardly see the words. You have beautifully captured my feelings about my brother's death and the impact I felt on his loss. Thank you for this experience. (Marlow)

Paul

How we met. I had met Paul several times at extended family functions, weddings, and birthday celebrations over the years. My brother

called me one day and said that he had been visiting with Paul and had

shared that I was involved in researching and collecting stories for a

"senior" sibling grief project. Paul asked him to contact me and share that

he was very interested in participating. I was honoured that he wanted to

participate and that my project had come up as a conversation from a

member of my family. I contacted Paul directly, and we discovered that

he did meet the criteria for participating in the research. We established a

date to share a conversation. It was at Paul's suggestion that we decided

to utilize the technology of internet communication and chose a program

called Skype. Skype provided both visual and verbal communication as

we shared in conversation and story. Paul was 87 years old when he

participated in this shared conversation with me.

Paul and I connected via Skype on April 20, 2014. I could see the

snow blowing outside of his window, and we chatted briefly about the

weather. We both identified that talking about the weather "seemed to be

a Canadian thing" (Paul) I appreciated being able to have a visual and

audio conversation with Paul. To date, my other partners had expressed

that they preferred to speak with me via telephone. I wondered if it was to

provide visual privacy and perhaps emotional privacy.

I reviewed the informed consent form with Paul that he had signed and sent back to me earlier in the month. I explained the purpose of my inquiry and the reason that I had chosen to seek siblings over the age of 60 who had recently experienced the death of a sibling. Paul was already aware of the death of my sister Annette.

Following is an excerpt of the transcribed conversation that started us into Paul's story. P is Paul (conversational partner) and D is Deb (inquirer):

> D: I really appreciate that you are willing to share your story with me. [Paul smiled and shook his head in affirmation.] So, I'm wondering . . . my first question is . . . would you share with me story or memory about your relationship with Robert that would help me know what your relationship was like with him?
>
> P: Ummm. Well, there's wide swings.
>
> D: Okay.

Paul's response to my initial question held my interest and curiosity, particularly when he paused and "ummmm," which contained no words, just a strong verbalizing. This was immediately followed by a descriptive metaphor that Paul placed a strong emphasis on, indicating to me that there was an unexpected story waiting to be told.

The footprint of the family. This is a group theme. Paul was 84 years old when his younger brother, Robert, died at the age of 75 years. Both Paul and Robert were born and raised in England. Paul identified that there were three children in his family of origin. Paul is the eldest in the family with a sister a year younger than he and then their younger brother, Robert. Paul was 9 years older than Robert. The introduction to the story of relationship between Paul and Robert was very powerful. Paul was thoughtful and deliberate in his choice of words and how he shared the start to his story of grief.

The participation of England in World War II had an everlasting impact on this family of origin story. Paul was 13 years old when he was evacuated with other children from the city where he lived and away from his known family for 3 years. Paul lived with a foster family for those 3 years. At the age of 16, he returned home from his evacuation experience to rejoin his family of origin. Paul shared that he lived for a year and a half with his family before he "went away to the sea." Paul became a seaman, which provided him with employment for the next 10 years. Paul reflected that because of these factors, he "saw very little of my brother." This part of the relational story of separation emerged several times during our shared conversational story. Paul described his

evacuation story as both a "big wrench "and as "an adventure, we knew

what bombs could do but it didn't really impact at that age."

P: You have to remember there was a nine-year age difference. I

went away. I was an evacuee in 1939, when he would be four

years old.

D: That was World War . . .

P: Two.

D: Two.

P: Yup. They evacuated all of the children from the major cities.

When the war was declared.

D: How old were you when that happened?

P: Thirteen.

D: Thirteen. That was quite an age.

P: So, for three years, I lived away from my parents.

P: And therefore, I didn't see my brother. And then I came back

and . . . I was only at my parents' place for about a year and a

half. And then I went away to sea.

D: Okay.

P: And so I saw very little of my brother . . . naturally during that

time. And I was at sea for ten years, five of which I was married.

And therefore, I lived in the south of England. And he lived in the

north. So, I really didn't see very much of him. As a matter of

fact, my wife saw much more of him then I did. I was away and

he would come down and visit with her because he was in the

army at that time. And he would spend his leave there rather than

go back to his . . . my parents' place. Well, it was my mother's

place cause my dad had died.

D: Okay.

P: Anyway ummm . . . so we didn't really grow up together. I

suppose it's one way of putting it. (Paul)

The lost years. This is a unique theme specific to the story of

Paul's lived experience. A second thread in the story of relational grief

between Paul and Robert is the reason that these two brothers had a large

gap in being involved and active siblings with each other. In the

introduction to his story, Paul had suggested that there had been "wide

swings" referring to his relationship with his brother. Following is the

excerpt from the transcribed conversation:

P: Ummm . . . when I finally quit going to sea, which was in

1954, and settled down, I saw him occasionally. It was at this

point I found he was gay.

D: Okay.

P: And that was a dramatic shock to me because I was brought up in an era where that wasn't talked about [voice trails off]. (Paul)

The story moved back into the time when Paul and his wife, Eileen, were still living in the south of England. Paul was very clear in his story that when he travelled north, it was to visit his mother, not Robert. Paul stated that on the "odd occasion," Robert would come by to visit with Paul and Eileen; however, it was usually when Paul was away.

The timeframe of the beginning of the estrangement between the brothers occurred in the mid 1950s. I wanted to know more about this historical timeframe as I was curious as to the strength of what had might have influenced Paul to walk away from his brother. My curiosity arose because of the difference that Paul related in his story of estrangement from Robert. Paul stated it was "because he [Robert] was gay." The literature that provided me with information about the widely held dominant narratives that were in existence in the era that Paul had identified are included in Appendix E. The external story that influenced the lost years between the brothers was the prevailing belief that same-sex relationships were not to be supported or tolerated. Paul had reported that "he [Robert] spent his two years in the army." It is poignant to point

out that Robert would have been exposed to these dominant narratives as he also served in the military. At that time, it was mandatory for young men to serve for 2 years under the law of conscription in England.

The lost years in this relational story was strong for Paul in his lived experience of grief. It contained more than the idea of missed opportunities. There was a sense of emotional and cognitively acknowledged remorse. In telling his story, Paul did not have the same number of storied experiences with his brother as the other siblings in this inquiry had experienced.

As Paul continued with his story he identified that he had moved away from England with his wife and children. They moved to Canada to begin a new and different life. Emotionally and geographically, the brothers were estranged for several decades.

The reconnection. This is a unique theme that describes a new relationship that was chosen by the two brothers. Paul identified two distinct stories that intersected and influenced his experience. After a significant pause, Paul continued with his story and then, in a strong, clear voice he said, "And really it was only after my mother died . . . that I suddenly realized that I was being very stupid about this." The death of their mother carried a significant influence that brought forth the story of

brothers and their different lifestyles into a new understanding at an

intimate level of possibility for Paul.

      The second narrative that provided a resource for change was told

through the voice of Eileen, Paul's wife. Paul identified that Eileen was

"a strong influence on me." Paul referred to Eileen's narrative of

understanding that Robert was his brother and he was gay. Eileen knew

Robert in a way that Paul did not. Robert had spent time visiting with

Eileen when they lived in England, often when Paul was away at sea.

This alternative narrative of Robert came from the voice of a woman who

knew him and cared for him, being his sister in law. This narrative

became a resource that provided a story of change for Paul, as he could

incorporate alternatives that allowed him to reach out to his brother. Paul

reflected and said, "So that turned it around [and] we began to form a

relationship"—the word "it" carrying the weight of the experience of the

estranged relationship between the two brothers. They talked by

telephone at least once a month, sometimes twice a month, and visited

each other as often as possible. Paul told of being "retired by the early

1990s" and lived in "Florida for six months of the year." Shortly after

Robert's partner died in the early 1990s, Robert made a trip to the United

States to visit with his partner's brother and family, who, also lived in

Florida. During this trip, Robert and Paul spent time with each other

getting caught up on some of the lost years. I asked Paul if he had had an

opportunity to engage in repairing the relationship:

> D: So, when you think about Robert now. Are there any areas of
>
> his life that you kind of puzzled about or you've wondered about?
>
> Or did you have an opportunity to work any of that out. You
>
> know some of the gaps . . . ummm . . .when you could speak with
>
> him and share with him.
>
> P: Ummm. We talked extensively on that first meeting that we
>
> had when he came to Florida. Umm he spent a lot of time with
>
> our children but he also spent a lot of time with me. Umm first
>
> thing in the morning he was an early riser like I was. And so, we
>
> would and we were living next door to the first green of the golf
>
> course and we sat outside, he was not a golfer so he was it was
>
> something that I would have to explain to him. And we would talk
>
> about many, many things and so I got to know more about his
>
> life, and then I ever thought possible because he. I don't know if
>
> he had a need to tell me or if was just that I was interested in what
>
> had happened to him over the years. Where he went from school
>
> into the army because conscription was still valid at that time.

D: Ummm. Of course.

P: He spent his two years in the army and it was after that that he studied to make a career for himself and met his partner and worked with his partner who was into real estate umm buying and selling and renovating places and that sort of thing. And Robert did a lot of the handy work. He was very artistic and very good at carpentry. He never took it up as a career at all it was just a hobby with him.

D: Right.

P: So, it was those kind of things that I learned quite a lot about him.

D: Ummm. So, what kinds of things are you . . . like . . . do you miss anything in your relationship with Robert now, since he's died? Do you think about him …. . . about it or reflect on it?

P: I think there are two things that when I sit and think about it. One that I'm sorry that I did not have a relationship with him for many years when particularly with Eileen being much more broad minded about his sexuality than I was. Ummm, I'm always very sorry that I lost those years.

D: Umm.

Paul continued to reflect on the first visit between brothers and shared that several members of his (Paul's) family consisting of adult children, partners and grandchildren travelled to meet their uncle. Paul shared "I was always pleased by that."

As Paul reflected on his experience of going back to England to participate in a memorial service for his brother, there was a pause in his story and then he spoke quietly: "So there was this . . . very loose connection with him because of the fact that circumstances kept us apart when he was a youngster when I might have forged stronger bonds." Paul shared that there were two things:

> When I sit and think about it, one, that I am sorry that I did not have a relationship with him for many years . . . and the other thing is of course . . . it's always very sad to lose someone in your family who is younger than yourself. . .. I'm sorry that he died when he did because we were just establishing a relationship.

Robert had invited Paul to celebrate his 75th birthday with him in England and died shortly before his birthday. Paul shared that although the brothers had spent time together as they were older that "it wasn't the same as having a working relationship with him."

On knowing grief and death. Paul had experienced numerous deaths in his lived experience. The deaths that had created a different experience for Paul were found in his relationships with his brother, Robert, and his wife, Eileen. The word shock was offered in the story and became a description of experience in the story. Paul, speaking of his younger brother, Robert, who died at 74 years of age shared, "It was a shock, but it wasn't a shock . . . because I knew he had been diagnosed of cancer of the pancreas [and] he had told me that he might have a year and a half."

Paul moved out of his story of Robert and into the story of his wife's terminal illness, stating that among other illnesses that Eileen had lived with, she had also received a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer and had died shortly before Paul's brother, Robert. In an emotionally powerful statement, he identified that Eileen had "died about 16 months after she was diagnosed, so it was . . . it was all tied together time wise. So, I was partially prepared for it. But you live on hope that it's going to be longer.*"*

Death came twice in a short time for Paul. He continued by sharing that he had "reached a point in my life over the past three of four years where I've seen and done a lot more than most people, I find that I

can accept things that would have upset me many years ago." Paul attributed his acceptance to the experience of grief as having to do "with the struggle I had after Eileen died, reconciling her death."

Paul continued in his story about knowing grief and death. Following is the transcribed excerpt:

P: But . . . death is something that I accept. Most people don't.

D: Ummhuumm.

P: Ummm . . . and so it does not upset me if people talk about Eileen's death or Robert's death, umm it probably upsets them more than it does me. If truth were known.

Paul accepted the death of Eileen, his wife, and the death of his brother, Robert. As this story shares, the acceptance of death does not provide a definition of whether or not there is a lived experience of grief. In this story told by Paul, it is clear that there is grief and that it exists in his relationship with his wife and is in existence between himself and his brother, Robert.

Paul acknowledged that he has a strong network of friends and family as well as being a volunteer with a caregiver's support network, which brings him "a feeling of comfort and well-being."

Paul spoke about the difference he has noticed in the use of language between North Americans and the "UK" in that North Americans use the phrase "passing" when referring to someone who died. For Paul, the word passing "gives the impression while they pass or they might pass by again . . . and to me, to say someone has died is very much more realistic outlook on life." In this description of difference, Paul is identifying how phrases and words can have different meaning with a different context, depending on how the local social process of communication and relationship are shared. Grief and death as words are deeply held stories with complex experiences.

Holding connection. As we began to end our time together, Paul introduced a poignant and cherished connection story by saying, "One, one thing I should say about Robert is that he was an accomplished pianist." Robert had come to Canada to visit with Paul, and the brothers had gone out for lunch to small restaurant. As they walked into the restaurant, Robert saw a piano sitting in the corner. He immediately went over to it, sat down, and began playing. To Paul's delight, which was obvious in his smile, he shared with me that Robert spoke out to the "proprietor" and suggested that the piano needed to be tuned "as it was

way out of whack." Paul's voice was light with laughter as he shared this with me.

Paul continued the story by taking me into a story of his childhood and his mother. Paul shared that his mother's family was "very musical," and she tried to get Paul into music lessons when he was 5 years old. Paul stated that after a time, the music teacher suggested to her that "she was wasting her time and money." Paul went on to say that Robert participated in music lessons and "he inherited the genes." In this connection story of music, Paul related that Robert had told him the story of how important music was to him and that when there was piano available, he would often play it, and people would join him and sing. Paul said that Robert had a "large repertoire of popular music" and that music and the piano were "tremendous thing[s] to him."

This aspect of the grief story underscored the background connection of a big brother knowing the emotional details of the importance of music for his younger brother. As a listener, I appreciated this story and thanked Paul for sharing it with me; he said, "My pleasure." And it was.

Story reflections. The broken relationship and the newly bonded sibling relationship is the footprint of the relational story between

brothers that Paul emphasized as he shared his lived experience of grief. There were quiet voices in this story that held a powerful story of relational connection that surrounded the experience of the brothers. There are three voices that became strong resources for Paul: his mother; his wife, Eileen; and his brother, Robert.

Although Paul did not specifically identify any background story on his relationship with his mother, he stated that one of the intersecting stories that provided a difference for him was that the death of their mother provided an experience of difference in how Paul was able to reach out and reconnect with Robert. Paul shared this detail with me after he had read the story I had written. The statement about his mother left me curious about the mother's voice and her life experiences for these siblings.

The quiet voice of Eileen being acknowledged as a "strong influence" of acceptance and support for being the reconnection for the brothers is also unknown and unspoken. Eileen knew Robert and welcomed her brother in law, Robert, into her life. Paul had stated, "As a matter of fact, my wife saw much more of him than I did." It was Eileen's story that had held open the possibility of connection for Paul

and Robert. Her presence created the bridge for them to reconnect while they were in Florida.

The voice of Robert is also heard in this story of experience through retelling of a life story that has elements of sadness and regret in it from Paul. In his adult life, Robert moved forward into his life and created a strong partnership with someone he loved and with whom he shared a life story. This difference in the family of origin experience for Paul and Robert was directly influenced by the geographical and emotional separation of the brothers, beginning with the Evacuation Policy of children during World War II.

In Paul's story, his statement at the beginning of our time together that he was an evacuee in 1939 became the opening for knowing that there was a more complex history that informed his family of origin and foretold difficulties for the brothers and their future relationship. These siblings had grown up and developed in different times and in a different family group. In his story of grief, Paul identified the sadness of knowing a different experience and the lost opportunities of sibling relationship. It is a powerful experience to explore the grief story shared by Paul and to begin to recognize the power of intersecting public narratives regarding how life becomes lived and the impact on other stories as they become

interwoven. In the footprint of his family World War II had an influence in the story of relationship for these two brothers.

In Paul's story of sibling life, there is a strong context of relational discontinuity. In many ways, this story lacks the rich detail and experiences that one might assume would exist given the biological ages of these two brothers. What is missing in Paul's story are the ordinary mundane moments that capture relational bonds. There was no sharing from Paul about the birth of his children or talk of the weather or holidays. The story did not contain elements of disagreements or feelings of support. These aspects of relational bond did not exist for Paul. This is where the grief of Paul's experience showed up for me as the listener. Paul identified in several statements the missing elements in creating a relationship with his brother. In the first statement, Paul described the context of his family of origin, saying, "I went away. I was an evacuee in 1939, when he would have been 4 years old [and] we didn't really grow up together." Later on in his story Paul stated, "Anyway, ummm, . . . so we didn't really grow up together. I suppose it's one way of putting it."

In the segment in which Paul reflects on the reconnection with Robert, he shared that "it wasn't the same as having a working relationship with him." And his voice trailed off. The absence of the

decades of sibling connection with the positivity of the reconnection magnified and affirmed the sibling connection. The deliberate decision to cut off the relationship with his younger brother is an integral element in this story of grief.

External meta narratives. In the story shared by Paul, there were two storylines that caught my attention: the first was his experience of being evacuated as young teenager in World War II, and the second was the belief that Paul identified as to the reason he estranged himself from his younger brother, Robert.

As I reviewed the transcript, I became curious as to what impact this story of evacuation would have had on the children who experienced it. Paul had informed me that it had created a distancing of the relationship between himself and his brother. I wondered what the impact might have been when he rejoined his original family system, which consisted of his parents, a younger sister and brother. I wondered how it might have been experienced when Paul returned home. How would this 16-year-old experience his family of origin? Did his foster family have influence on who he became or how he participated in the world? Paul did not identify or speak of any stories about his foster family during our

shared conversation nor did he identify any foster family stories after he

had read the story I had written.

I searched for external narratives that told of any aspect of the

British evacuation story. I located a narrative that assisted me in

comprehending the possibilities of how children and this experience

impacted families. The article was a synopsis of a book titled *When the*

Children Came Home: Stories of Wartime Evacuees written by Julie

Summers and published in the March 12, 2011, edition of *The Guardian*

newspaper. The book details the stories of some of the children who were

evacuated during this time period and reflects on their experiences of

being sent away to live in geographically and different familial homes.

The evacuation of three million children aged 5 to 14 years on September

1, 1939, was codenamed Operation Pied Piper. Summers wrote, "Most

returned, but how they had changed and how the separation affected their

relationship with their families is seldom considered" (2011, p. 1).

Summer interviewed a woman by the name of Joan who as a child had

been one of the evacuees. Joan reported that she "found it difficult'' and

reported that "my family all commented on how I talked differently, so I

had a strange feeling of not quite belonging yet wanting to be there

because they were my family" (Summers, 2011, p. 2). In reference to her

siblings, Joan is quoted as sharing, "But with my siblings it was more difficult. They are my family and I am very fond of them but they never went away like I did, so they don't understand that I have had these two lives" (Summers, 2011, p. 2).

Summers (2011) wrote that other interviewees spoke about not being able to reconnect with their family of origins. Summers identified Gordon, who shared with her that he had requested and was permitted to return to his foster family. Gordon commented on the stories of other evacuees and summarized it by stating to Summers that "some were happy, some were appalling and some were just unhappy" (Summers, 2011, p. 4).

This article directed me in paying attention to the relational stories that had impacted generations of families from World War II. There are numerous stories and experiences of loss for family systems from the parental story, the sibling story, and the story of self-experience in this historic and difficult time. I shared this narrative with Paul, and in his reflection with me he stated, "I had never thought that the three years evacuated had impacted my life but maybe it was the cause of the difficulty I had in forming relationships except with Eileen [his wife]."

A question that emerged for me after I read the articles on Operation Pied Piper was how did Robert feel about having an older brother whom he did not know move back into the family home? What were the stories circulating in the family and the general public at the re-entry of these missing children?

The second story line that I was curious about occurred when Paul identified "that was a dramatic shock to me because I was brought up in an era where that wasn't talked about." Once again there seemed to be a background narrative in the public domain that supported the estrangement of these two brothers. I wanted to know more about political influence that was powerful enough to create a total estrangement in the relationship between Paul and Robert. I was curious as to the strength of what might have influenced Paul to walk away from his brother.

The public or mainstream story themes during this time period spoke of beliefs that defined gay men as not being capable or strong enough to participate in situations and activities, such as fighting, and being in the military where they would need to be brave and strong. In addition to this public story was another narrative that suggested the morale of men in the military would be undermined if there were

homosexual men in their ranks. These specific stories are the background

narratives that influenced the population in Britain and mirrors the story

shared by Paul when he stated, "I was brought up in an era . . ."; the era

that Paul referred to in his description of his reaction to Robert public

dominantly held narratives established and perpetuated homophobic

orientations. The state upheld these discourses, establishing legal

definitions and enacting laws that not only forbade same-gender

relationships, it was reinforced via threats of imprisonment and or social

humiliation thus creating a status of outcasts. The prevailing story in

Britain during World War II identified same sex relationships as a court

marital offence.

In February, 2014, Emma Mason published an article in the *BBC

History Magazine* titled "On the Same Side: Homosexuals During the

Second World War." Mason explored the stories that were in the public

domain by identifying and sharing the experiences of men who were

active in the military during this time. Among those identified was Flight

Lieutenant Ian Gleed who piloted spitfires for the British Royal Air Force

(RAF). Gleed received several medals for his heroism in battle. Gleed

was a war time hero and publicly celebrated for his bravery. Gleed wrote

a memoir that shared his experiences during the war. The editor asked

him to write in that he was involved in a heterosexual relationship as he was not allowed to share his relational status of being a gay man. It was during a 1990 interview on BBC that a former member of the RAF by the name of Christopher Glotch, spoke about his relationship as a partner with Gleed. Glotch articulated the attitudes and beliefs that were prevalent during World War II. Glotch identified the threats of acknowledged relationships and the serious consequences that might occur if a relationship between same-sex partners was discovered. Same-sex relationships were "against the law," which meant that they could be court-martialled, placed in prison or "servicemen could be kicked out" (Mason, 2014, p. 3). Mason (2014) identified and quoted another serviceman, Dudley Cave, who stated the following:

> They used us when it suited them, and then victimised us when the country was no longer in danger. I am glad I served but I am angry that military homophobia was allowed to wreck so many lives for over 50 years after we gave our all for a freedom that gay people were denied. (p. 3).

How multiple narratives become influential resources in determining the acceptance of a value that is held as truth and then gets translated into the expectations of others can be understood by listening

to the story that informed Paul. His story speaks about coming into

already existing stories in the social fabric of our lives that is specific and

local. Gergen (2000) identified this interlocking narrative influence,

writing, "We are generally prepared to accept as 'true' only those stories

that conform to existing conventions" (p. 163).

There is power of social acceptance through the construction of

story that moves into an accepted narrative and becomes known through

retelling. In Paul's story, his grief is strong when he related his

estrangement from his brother. It seems as if there is a component of both

emotional and cognitive sadness at the knowledge that Paul himself

initiated and maintained the estrangement in this sibling system for

decades. The fact that Robert came forward to connect with Paul once

Paul had reached to connect with him speaks to the strength of a brother

bond. I wonder if the intensity of grief that Paul now experiences exists

because of the relationship that the brothers were able to establish prior to

Robert's death. As Paul sadly shared, "It wasn't the same as having a

working relationship with him."

Paul's reflection. After I completed this story of grief, I sent it to

Paul and identified that I would like his thoughts on this story. It was

important to me as the author of this story that we be collaborative

authors in its telling. Following are the excerpts from his response:

> The draft is great. I had never thought that the three years
>
> evacuated had impacted my life but maybe it was the cause of the
>
> difficulty I had in forming relationships except with Eileen. . . .
>
> Another thing, I did not mention, our mother never accepted
>
> Robert being gay. Maybe her death released me from a
>
> subconscious alliance with her view of Robert. (Paul)

This understanding of how strong an influence another person's story, the

mother's, might have had on Paul's story identifies the possibility of the

often unknown but heard existence of background stories.

Deborah

"I don't know how to do this," she murmured to me. I responded,

"I don't know either, we'll do this together. I will go with you as far as I

can go." With her eyes closed, she sighed and said, "Okay." My sister,

Annette, lay in a hospital bed, and I was lying beside her, holding her in

my arms. She died four days later. Annette was 58 at the time of her

death, and I was 48 years old.

In retrospect, I recognize that in this moment held deep in my

memory was an exquisite, intimate and somehow typical response that

spoke to the sibling bond we held close. Although it was often Annette who would support and encourage me when I was her much younger sister, it was appropriate at this time of our shared lives that I supported her. This aspect of my own life experience is one that I have often described as "midwifing" Annette's death process. Becvar (2003) used the active term of midwife as a way of describing the support process one brings in supporting the journey of dying for another.

I share this moment to acknowledge the start of my story that holds importance to me when I share my lived grief experience as a sibling.

I have included aspects of my lived story as a bereaved sibling to provide my story as the sixth story in this collection of sibling grief stories. I was deeply touched each time one of my conversational partners told me their story. There were several differences between my experience and the experience of my conversational partners. The first difference is that I was not 60 years of age when my sister died. The partner cohort in this inquiry had a criterion of being 60 years of age and older to be eligible for participation. The second difference is that the inquiry participants had to be at least six months out from the actual

death of the sibling and had to have experienced the death as a recent

event. It has been 11 years since my sister died.

On knowing death and grief. Reflecting upon the differences

between me and my conversational partners, I had to recognize my

profession as a mental health clinician. In order to equalize the field of

this inquiry and my inclusion as a bereaved sibling, I have included a

summary of my professional experience. I am a licensed psychologist and

family therapist. I have created and facilitated numerous workshops for

health care professionals for over a decade, teaching about family

systems with a focus on grief and bereavement. I was invited to provide a

workshop for allied health care professionals that focused primarily on

grief and bereavement for patients over the age of 60 years. In addition to

these professional experiences, I held the position of grief care manager

for a health care region for several years. In that position, I provided

support and consultation to palliative physicians, visiting medical interns,

palliative allied health care professionals, and volunteers. As a clinician, I

have been providing support to individuals and families in the area of

psychotherapy since 1999. Prior to that, I was the director of a

department known as family services for a provincial nongovernment

association with the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada.

Readers may now be asking why I have chosen to put my professional summary in this story at this point. My intention is to share that I have been involved with death and grief in depth from an early time in my professional career. It is not possible to include everything I know about grief and death in this section. What I do know is that everyone's experience and knowledge is different. What I do know is that is having had the experience and sharing it in a story is often a common connection. This was confirmed once again by my participation in this project as an inquirer. I came into conversation with my partners having no preconceived knowledge about what and how they would share their stories with me. There was an ease in creating a collaborative experience with each of the conversational partners. As I spoke with each one and established eligibility and informed consent, there was no hesitation from any of them as they began telling their stories. Please note that although I am a bereaved sibling, I am not claiming a superiority of connectedness with other bereaved siblings over a non-bereaved person. A non-bereaved person can make a connection by different conversations and stories.

The footprint of the family and the footprint of this inquiry story. I pondered which story I could share with readers that would provide the context of understanding the history and culture of my family

of origin. I was born into this story; it was in existence before my birth.

Our mother was born and raised in Great Britain, the youngest of three

daughters. There was a significant age gap between the three sisters, and

our mother was younger by 10 years. Due to the death of her mother in

the early 1920s, she was 10 or 11 years of age when she was orphaned.

Because of her older sisters' life stages when their mother died and the

fact that their maternal grandmother was in failing health, our mother was

placed with a different family. World War II broke out and my mother

decided to enlist in the air force. She lied on her birthdate as she was too

young to enlist. She used to say, "Well, I fibbed a bit; I was old enough."

During this same time, our father, Rod, was going to school in the

prairies in Canada. As soon as he was eligible, he decided to enlist in the

Canadian Air Force. My mother, Nora, and Rod were assigned to the

same base in England and met through mutual friends. They subsequently

married.

At the end of the war, the Canadian Air Force flew our father

home while our mother who was 6 months pregnant with my sister,

Annette, came to Canada on a ship called the Queen Mary with hundreds

of other war brides and their children. The three of them—my mother,

my father, and Annette—had their own story of lived experience before I

was born. Annette was 10 years old when I was born into this existing

family. Our brother joined us two and one half years later. So now, we

were a family of five. Annette was an awesome big sister; she valued us

dearly. We used to tell her that once I showed up and then our brother

showed up, it took the pressure off her as the only child. How boring that

must have been to be alone, we used to say to her. She would laugh and

start chasing us around to tickle us.

Annette left home when I was 9, and I missed her presence.

Annette made choices in her life that our parents initially disagreed with,

and for a few years, she would come home only at holiday times.

Eventually she came home to live with us, and she brought a husband and

her firstborn, my niece. Life got back on track, and her relationship with

our parents was healed. Annette and her husband had a second child, a

son. I had the delight of watching my niece and nephew grow up. As

adults, my niece and I have a relationship that is more typical of a sibling

than aunt and niece. We share many life events and moments. It was my

niece and I, who moved into the hospital to support Annette, my sister

and her mother. We lived together in the hospital for 2 weeks.

Our mother was born in England and endured difficult times in

her life. Mom did not share details of her past life with us as she believed

in living in the present. She loved having family around, and she would always sing and dance. We danced everywhere, in the kitchen, in the living room, and sometimes outside on the front lawn. It was much later that we began to understand some of the trauma that our mom had endured growing up in Britain. The one constant that would occur in my family was that if an unexpected loud noise—be it thunder from a storm or a loud siren from a firetruck—I knew that I might find my mother hiding in a room or trying to hide the tears in her eyes. If she had gone into a room, she would instantly try to find something to do in case anyone saw her. It was years later when I began to understand and wonder what it would have been like for her as a young girl having to flee to the bomb shelters. It was also later that I found out her family holdings and properties in Southampton had been bombed and were destroyed.

My father's older brothers were very involved in our lives. Several of them continued to farm, and Dad would often go out to help with the harvests. We always went as a family. My father's family are storytellers. I grew up knowing where I came from and about the relationships of our elders and ancestors, which was in direct contrast to

my mother's stories, which were limited in detail. There was a lot of love and laughter in my family.

The theme named as the family footprint held several intersecting points of story with my own story. Several of my conversational partners told stories of their families and family members, often a parent who was involved in World War II. As I grew up, I knew about difficult times in England, and I knew some detail as to how people were impacted from World War II. Although several of the conversational partners shared stories of World War II being impactful on their families, I was drawn to Paul's story in a different way. I had not met anyone who had spoken about being an evacuee under the Operation Pied Piper directive until Paul shared his story. In the background of Paul's story, the influence of World War II on his life is the experience of my family, which has also been impacted by World War II. This intersecting storyline belongs to the storied experience of both my parents and my sister, Annette. Our mother is from England and was too old to be evacuated at the age of 16 years. She chose to join the British Air Force.

In Anne's story, she told about the difficulty that her brother Peter had experienced as a young teenager in his immigration story and then having to find some way to create a life for himself. He went into the

military and did not choose to stay in it as a career. This story had a
connection to experience in military.

Cathy spoke about military life and how it impacted her family
experience. She identified that her sister Natasha looked after her in the
different countries where her father's service took the family. Natasha
was her go-to person in different life experiences. I had the experience of
an older sister who also looked after me when I was younger. My
knowledge of the connection to an older sister relationship was directly
related to my own sibling experience.

As an adult, I often went to spend Christmas holidays with
Annette and her family, which now included her grandchildren. Through
the course of our individual and relational lives, we became equals and
dearest of friends. Annette gave me a coaster that reads, "Sisters by
Chance, Friends by Choice." I continue to use it, and it brings me a sense
of connection in the valuing of our continuing bonds. When we had a few
moments alone that night, Annette shared with me how important I was
in her life and that she wanted me to always know that being sisters and
being friends was a life gift to her. I have that coaster with me on my
desk as I work on this project. On the day that Cathy and I shared our
conversation, I had a cup of tea on that coaster. As I was debriefing

myself by thinking and writing in my field journal I looked at that coaster and wrote, "I just heard another precious sister story where sisters by chance and friends by choice seems to be a shared theme."

Holding connection. Over the years, I have shared my lived experience of grief with others privately and publicly. Following is story that I have shared often. I had not recognized it as holding connection until I had finished writing the sibling stories in this inquiry.

Annette came out to visit with me in the summer of 2004; she did not look healthy nor did she have the energy she normally had when we were together. She told me that she was on antibiotics for pneumonia and that she had been taking them for 4 months. I strongly encouraged her to return to her physician once she was home and ask for further tests, including a chest x-ray. We always spoke either by telephone, email, or instant messenger on a weekly basis. I knew that she had gone back to her doctor. It was approximately six weeks later when she called and said, "There's a spot on my lung and they don't know what it is." I remembered feeling ill after that conversation. Several months later, it was confirmed that she had been given a misdiagnosis of pneumonia and that the cancer in her lung had been missed. By the time she was diagnosed, she had stage 4 cancer. I started going out to be with her more

as her diagnosis and treatment proceeded. Geographically, I lived quite a distance from where she lived. I lived in a different province and for me to get to where Annette lived, it took time, money, and energy. If I drove to get there, it took me almost two days. When I flew, it took a couple of hours.

I was out shopping one day after I had come back from spending the weekend with Annette. I found a charm bracelet that I thought would be a good Christmas gift for her. The charm I put on her bracelet said, "Live, Love, Laugh." I felt that it portrayed our shared values and summed up our lives as sisters.

I told other members of my family about the gift I had found, and we began a discussion about how difficult it was for each of us to not be together to support Annette at this time in her life. We decided to get Italian bracelets with the same charm for us to wear. The next time I went to visit Annette was in that autumn just after her confirmed diagnosis. One night we all went out for dinner and during dinner, we gave each other one of these bracelets. Annette was not aware of what we intended to do. I introduced the exchange and shared that the bracelets were a symbol that we are never alone in this time. When we wear the bracelets, we will be connected to one another. We put the bracelets on and shared

hugs. Annette told me after that she was so touched by the gift and thoughts, that she would wear it always. She wore it when she went for chemotherapy. I wore mine constantly. The men in the family felt left out and wanted a symbol to wear as well. They each got silver chains with a charm that said, "Live, Love, Laugh." That Christmas, Annette got me a charm to wear on my bracelet and it has a heart with the word sister on it. As a family, we continue to wear this jewelry as way of keeping Annette close and as way of staying connected by heart to each other. Whenever I facilitate a presentation on grief and bereavement I wear my bracelet.

A poignant memory for me about the charms occurred the second to last day Annette was alive. I witnessed this exchange. Our father had come into the room to sit with her for a while at the hospital. He leaned over to kiss her forehead, and she touched his chain with the charm on it and looked up at him and said, "Please don't forget me." They cried together; I left the room and then I cried.

As a grandmother, my sister adored her two grandchildren and loved watching them grow in life. They were in their teen years when she died. The year 2013 brought the start of a new generation to my family. As their great aunt, I was very connected to each of them. In July 2013, my great nephew, Annette's grandson, and his partner had a baby boy.

They sent me a picture of this precious baby, and I could hardly breath as I looked at him. I cried because I knew how much my sister would have loved this baby, and I felt my heart beat faster as I thought of Annette. It was as if my thoughts collided at the same time. Three months later I held this new baby in my arms; I remember kissing the top of his head and then telling him aloud that his grandma Annette loved him. It was spontaneous and I was surprised at myself.

Five months later Annette's granddaughter also gave birth to a precious little boy, and once again, I was the one who welcomed him and told him his grandma Annette loved him. Two little great grandsons for Annette, and I am the one to hold them and love them. I recognized when I held these two babies that I would be one of their living links to a great grandmother they would know through pictures and stories.

As of 2016, Annette has three great grandsons. As a family, we have once again been able to share stories and bring Annette into our conversations. The first three years after her death, it was difficult for family members to talk about her as we visited and shared in different life experiences. This has eased somewhat, and there are now collective stories of Annette that are alive in the family again. As a family, I believe that I can attest to the deep sadness we experienced after her death.

As her sibling, I am also in nestled in the family with different titles and relationships. At this level of family development, Annette, our brother, and I knew that one day we would be the elder generation in our family systems. Now it is me and my (our) brother who are the older generation, superseded only by our father, Rod, who is a dynamic, loving, and involved patriarch in his early nineties. As her sister, I am a living link between Annette and the rest of our family.

Each one of my conversational partners incorporated a connection between themselves and their nieces and nephews by ensuring that their dead sisters' and brothers' voices were heard in the family.

Summary

My initial inquiry that advanced this project was exploring the lived experience of an individual 60 years and older, who has had a sibling die in recent years. The main constructs of interest that I had identified were related to age, relationship, and the lived experience. Specifically, I was exploring for difference and similarities in the lived experience for sisters and brothers who were at least 60 years old when their sibling had died.

In some instances, there were surprises for the siblings as their stories unfolded. Marlow expressed surprise at hearing herself use the

expression of feeling like an orphan after her brother Brian had died.

Cathy voiced emotion that suggested surprise at the strength of her

statement that "I can't believe that she [sister Natasha] is gone." In the

reflection that Paul sent to me after he had read the story that I had

written about his experience, he wondered if his experience of being

evacuated during the World War II had created the difficulty that he

experienced in establishing relationships with others. The unspoken

extension of this utterance might be found in the possibility that if he had

grown up with his brother, they might have found a different way to have

a relationship rather than the complete cut off that occurred.

     The similarities that I heard in the shared stories became the

group themes, while the unique themes spoke to the difference in the

sibling stories. What became apparent to me as the inquirer is that each

sibling story had a local family orientation that was integral in exploring

the underlying construct in each story. The unique themes held the

significance of the sibling relationship while the group themes held the

sibling dynamic, which was placed in the context of the local family

stories that had meaningful significance.

     In the group theme of how we met, I found that with each new

conversational partner there was an ease in joining with him or her to

initiate the shared time of storytelling. I wondered about the dynamics of

the ease in co-creating this important aspect of our collaborative time

together. As I pondered this idea, I recognized that we were sisters and

brothers telling a story about sisters and brothers. It was a shared

intimacy of knowledge.

The idea of knowledge about the experience and facts of grief and

death were identified by each of the conversational partners as they

talked about their lived experiences of grief after the death of a sibling.

The footprint of the family was where each sibling placed his or

her sibling relationship into the context of the full family system. In

holding connection, each of the bereaved siblings had a story that held a

different way of acknowledging the activity and linking of the siblings.

Each of the shared situations occurred during the time when the sibling

was alive. Each of us identified a symbolic connection that embodied the

essence of the deceased sibling. Anne has both the dream of her brother

and the experience of physically hugging him in the dream. Cathy has the

kingfisher. Edward has the striped ball. Marlow has a strong emotional

connection that holds her brother Brian as the calm leveller. Paul has

music with the sound and vision of Robert playing the piano. I have my

bracelet that has a live, love, laugh charm on it as well the sister charm
that Annette had given me at our last Christmas together.

In the unique themes, I found the intricate constructs that held the
connection in the sibling relational story. In Anne's story, she shared her
knowledge of the fragile time in the life of her brother. Anne was not
only the witness to these times but also had a knowledge of Peter that
carried understanding of the flow of their sibling life. When I use the
term flow of sibling life, this speaks to the context of knowing each other
differently in the family. In the unique theme of the protection of an older
brother, Anne identified how it had been Peter who came to her and
provided support through a tumultuous time and walked with her
emotionally and physically until she was safe according to family
standards. An aspect of this grief story heard the telling of Anne's
knowledge of the impact of professional and personal tragic moments as
Peter witnessed the difficult and horrific deaths of others. He was unable
to prevent the deaths and he was unable to provide rescue, which he had
been trained to do. As I thought about this experience, my mind
shuddered at the idea of watching others who were suffering and dying.
My compassion increased for Peter in his professional career and in his
own personal suffering.

The active continuation of relationship for Cathy has been an integral orientation to the survival of the sibling relationship between her and her sister Natasha. This theme was an organizing principle in the story of Cathy's lived experience. It clearly speaks to the value and importance of Natasha in Cathy's life. The hidden story of the bereavement and grief for the older generation of sisters, being that of her mother and her aunt, came out embedded in the story of Natasha and Cathy. Cathy suggested that her aunt and her sister had similar characteristics. In the story about her sense of grief in the recent death of her aunt, Cathy identified her strong sense of loss in that Natasha was not available to share this experience with Cathy. Natasha was the one who would have understood and shared Cathy's grief about their aunt.

Edward brought forth an unexpected story when he told about the earlier death of another brother, Gregory, in his sibling system. The brother's death identified at the beginning of Edward's story was that of his older brother Brian. The title of lost opportunities was where Edward told his deepest experience of grief. There were longer pauses that accompanied the words he used in his conversation with me. The lost opportunities applied to both of the brothers who had died.

In Marlow's story, the early death of her brother Gregory also created a change in how Marlow viewed life and in her desire to geographically leave her hometown. Gregory's death had a deep impact on the experience of grief for both Edward and Marlow as siblings from the same family. They each told different stories of sibling grief that contained the specific bonds in their relationships. Marlow experienced a loss of family when her older brother Brian died.

The estranged relationship formed the basis of the story that Paul shared in this project. His experience of reconnecting and building a new adult relationship with his brother, Robert, was significant. The lost years are blank and are only filled in after the brothers reconnected and spend time getting to know each other. Paul has early memories that he is able to connect with this younger sibling, which is found in the telling of his holding connection story. It was the importance of music from the family of origin that moved into a special story of recent times for Paul and his brother, Robert.

In the Chapter 5, I will explore the four main concepts that emerged from these discoveries. The conceptualizations provide the basis for exploring and realizing the refinements of grief as a relational dynamic in a bereaved sibling system.

Chapter 5: The Deepening Story

Family evolution is like a musical composition, in which the meaning of individual notes depends on their rhythmic and harmonic relationship with each other and with the memories of past melodies, as well as those anticipated but not yet written (McGoldrick et al., 1999, p. 125).

In this chapter, I identify the knowledge that I gathered in this inquiry by summarizing the main ideas created and which oriented and directed the flow of my inquiry. I begin with an overview of the inquiry, followed by my discoveries. I then discuss the context of the discoveries in relation to the existing knowledge in the literature. This is followed by identifying limitations of the inquiry, considerations for clinical application, and recommendations for further inquiries.

Overview of the Inquiry

This qualitative inquiry began as a quest to locate and explore the lived experiences of siblings, aged 60 years and older, who have had a sibling(s) die in recent years. As a clinician, I had the experience of working with older bereaved siblings. I searched for information and knowledge in regard to grief and bereavement in the older sibling system and found limited literature specific to this population.

As a sibling, I have my own story about grief as my older sister died several years ago. I made the decision to engage in a qualitative inquiry to explore the stories of lived experience from bereaved siblings and hopefully to provide an opportunity for siblings to tell their stories, and to contribute to the existing knowledge of grief and bereavement in the family life cycle. I was interested in exploring bereavement in a specific family system, which was from the context of mature sibling relationships. This was accomplished by exploring the narratives and experiences of grief in the context of the sibling relationships. In this inquiry, I share six stories: five from participants and one from me as the author.

My philosophical belief of the world is that the human world is interconnected and relational at the most basic level. Social constructionism recognizes that knowledge and understandings emerge through the communicative aspects of the social world. The process subsumes a relational context. An integral influencer of social constructionism is the acknowledged capacity to encourage and open opportunities to appreciate the multiple possibilities that exist. It is often the acknowledgement of coexistence that potentiates an experience of unease in supporting a construct of multiple possibility (Gergen &

Gergen, 2008; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). In this inquiry, my focus

was on the everyday life experience of grief in the relationship of

siblings. Grief is a word that invites the emerging story of a relational

process; it is one word that holds multiple possibilities.

      Designing the inquiry. In creating the research design for this

inquiry, I chose to combine narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin

& Connelly, 2000) and dialogical narrative analysis (Frank, 2005, 2010,

2012) as the methodological approach. Narrative inquiry provided me

with an orientation of appreciating the landscape of an inquiry from a

narrative perspective while dialogical narrative analysis provided a

distinct orientation that involved the movements of a story. The question

becomes is there a difference between the two approaches? The first

difference for me is that narrative inquiry became a methodological

paradigm that provided knowledge and wisdom in the creation, design,

and participation in all aspects of my inquiry. As a novice narrative

inquirer, I learned about the multi complex foundations of the ethics,

procedures, and plurality of designing and carrying out a narrative

inquiry (Clandinin 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and

Connelly (2000) reflected that humans "lead storied lives on storied

landscapes" (p. 8). Secondly, I began to understand and reflect on the storied social world of lived experience.

Dialogical narrative analysis taught me the nuances of exploring a story. Stories are the life companions and are ever evolving (Frank 2005, 2010, 2012). I learned about discovering and exploring stories from an analytical orientation that believe all stories inherently have multiple story lines. In summary, narrative inquiry explores the storied journey of a lived experience while dialogical narrative analysis explores the journey of the story. I used narrative inquiry to create the foundation of my inquiry and dialogical narrative analysis to explore the journey of the story as told by the bereaved sibling.

Conversational partners. To find siblings who would volunteer to become conversational partners in this inquiry, I considered the main constructs in the question that guided my inquiry. My guiding question was what is the lived experience of siblings of individuals, 60 years and older, who have had a sibling die in recent years?

The constructs informed the criteria that I chose for participant inclusion. The listed inclusion criteria turned out to be having an experience of sibling death, the attainment of being over the age of 60 when the death occurred, and being at least 6 months out from when the

death occurred. Lastly, and most importantly, I required that the grief

experience was not complicated. Complicated grief is a term used to

identify that a bereaved person is experiencing difficult and complex

aspects in the process of grief.

I used the age value of 60 years to provide a discrete number in

which to establish a differentiated and mature sibling system as the

population involved and secondly to be able to enter a directed search of

knowledge through relevant literature sources. According to the United

Nations, the number 60 is the age that is defined as "elderly" (Sowers &

Rowe, 2007, p. 3). Being 6 months out from the experience of the death

of family member provided psychological distance and time for the

surviving sibling. This created a specific requirement to minimize any

psychological vulnerabilities.

As I considered this list, I recognized that I had a potential referral

base from my past and present professional colleagues. I composed a

letter describing my inquiry and what type of grief experience would be

appropriate. From this source came three participants who became my

conversational partners in the inquiry. A fourth participant came forward

as the result of a conversation from one of my extended family members.

The fifth participant also requested inclusion in the project. As the fifth

participant, Marlow had been in conversation with her brother (Edward) who had already participated in an interview with me. Edward had shared his experience of being a conversational partner, and Marlow asked him to contact me. I established contact with each of the participants prior to the conversation to ensure suitability according to the established criteria and secondly to discuss informed consent and the twinned concepts of confidentiality and anonymity. The participants ranged in age from 60 years to 87 years of age. There were three women and two men who became conversational partners. Their countries of origin were Britain, Canada, Denmark, Scotland, and the United States of America.

Engaging in the inquiry. I chose to create single-session interview format for two reasons: first to facilitate an ordinary conversation opportunity and second to focus on sharing a told story. As a clinician, I am aware that stories are often told first in a single session. Continued sessions are often about an aspect of the already told story.

The shared conversations with my conversational partners were audio recorded and transcribed. Each of the conversational partners was offered the opportunity to review the transcription of the conversations. None of the participants wanted to read the transcribed sessions. Sessions ranged in time from 60 min to 120 min. The conversations were

conducted by telephone and Skype. I had given each of my

conversational partners several choices in how we could share time

together. The choices were via telephone, Skype, or Face Time. I was

surprised that four out of the five partners chose telephone. The one

partner who chose to Skype was the eldest in this group, and he stated

that he preferred the opportunity to be face to face. I have wondered if the

choice of the other four partners to use the telephone as the medium in

sessions might be related to physical or emotional privacy. In conducting

the conversation via telephone, I listened intently to the voices of my

conversational partners as I recognized that all visual cues were non-

existent. I listened to the verbal richness told with different accents from

the influence of countries of origin and other provinces of Canada.

The conversations did span three countries and two Canadian

provinces all with different time zones. An unexpected issue came

forward when two of the original audiotaped recordings was found to be

non-retrievable. This left me in a dilemma of sharing the information and

requesting the possibility of second conversations with two of my

conversational partners. Both of my conversational partners offered

without hesitation to have an additional conversation with me. One of my

partners shared a more emotionally driven and intense conversation the

second time. This experience identified the collaborative nature and

commitment that the conversational partners had with my inquiry and

with sharing their story.

In total, we shared seven conversations and five written

exchanges. Each of the conversational partners read their retold story and

then provided written feedback and comments to me. Their involvement

ensured the authenticity of each of the stories that I retold about their

lived experience.

Process of investigation and story synthesis. My investigative

process involved ensuring accuracy by reviewing the audio tapes with the

written scripts multiple times and making corrections such as spelling

errors and missed words. I then created working transcriptions by

reprinting and using wide columns on each page to begin an open coding

process. Once the narrative coding was completed, I extracted the coded

information and created conceptual piles that identified similar or

common threads and different or unique threads. I then distilled the 20

conceptual threads into group (common) and unique signposts for the

retold stories in this inquiry. These became the highlighted constructs in

the lived experiences of grief. I sought the connection and links in and

between the stories told by the bereaved siblings. I designated the

highlighted constructs as themes for the telling of my inquiry story. My

challenge was to ensure that the narrative integrity of the individual

stories told to me was retained in the retelling of each story. This was

accomplished by providing the retold story to my conversational partners.

The thematic construct in my inquiry is specific to creating a

narrative structure in which to ensure that the reader is aware of different

threads in the story. The word theme holds a political reference in the

paradigm of a narrative inquiry. It is essential then to clarify that my use

of theme does not designate a limited, finalized, or closed aspect of

content, person, life, or story. I used the word theme to provide an ease in

reading.

Discoveries From the Inquiry

Here I discuss my discoveries: grief is influenced by other stories;

shock is the response to the death of a sibling; relational time is not

chronological time; and siblings create the bridge for the transforming

family story.

Grief is influenced by other stories. Stories accompany people

throughout their lives and function as a presence that both soothes and

challenges people in life. Human beings are born into ongoing stories that

emerge from the juxtaposition of biological fact and social reality

(Clandinin, 2013; Frank, 2010).

I began each conversation with the bereaved siblings asking if

they would share a story about their deceased sibling that would help me

understand and know who their sibling was to them. As each story

deepened, I could hear rich description, thoughtful insights, questions,

and accompanying emotion. Story is a powerful verbal and nonverbal

presentation.

In addition, this inquiry confirmed for me that there are stories

that function in the background passing on information and influence.

During the process of this experience, I came to understand how stories

gathered legitimacy in the retelling. My conversational partners in this

inquiry related some of the external influences on their lives vis a vis

metanarratives. Cathy reflected on her appreciation for the expression of

grief that came from the Victorian era. Marlow shared how the teachings

of the Roman Catholic Church had been a strong influence on her

younger self. Marlow identified that she had fears of going to sleep as a

child because she thought she would die. She stated that after the sudden

death of her brother Gregory, she realized that hell could not exist as her

beloved brother was not someone who would go to hell. Her own fears of going to sleep were extinguished.

In Paul's story, the influence of public, religious, and family belief structures that identified homosexuality as a sin informed his decision to reject his brother. Over time, Paul reconsidered the outside influence of external beliefs and made amends. He chose to build a new relationship with his brother.

In each of these stories, an underlying dilemma that had been influenced from outside sources was resolved. Knowledge does not equal understanding. Participating in stories as both teller and listener has potential to create a shared understanding that leads into knowledge.

Shock is the response to the death of a sibling. There is a common belief that experiencing the death of a sister or brother is normal and expected and that the older a person is, the less the death will impact the surviving sibling(s). The assumption is that older adults will be marginally impacted in comparison to a bereaved sibling who experiences the death of a sibling at a younger age. The outcomes of my inquiry suggest that bereaved siblings 60 years and older are significantly impacted in their lived experience after the death of a sister or brother. Age is not a safeguard against grief, and the experience is shock. In each

of the stories, the siblings expressed dismay, surprise, and shock when their sibling(s) died. Prior knowledge of impending death did not mitigate the experience of shock as a response.

Anne stated that when her older brother Peter died that "he looked, still looked good and you know he looked a lot healthier than he was . . . but . . . it was a shock for all of us." Cathy shared about the death of her sister Natasha, "But it was certainly a shock." Paul shared that when his brother Robert died at age 75 years that "it was a shock." Edward and Marlow had each told a story that identified the shock felt when their brother Gregory had died decades earlier when they were in their twenties.

Shock is about the absence of a relational other. Shock becomes the absence of the interactional. The question becomes, "Who am I without the presence of my sister /brother in my life? "Who is with me that has shared a story that is created from experiences, memories, interlocking narratives, and known ways of being?" "There is no one available who knows me." There is a sense of dislocation in the idea of shock when it describes the acknowledgement that a sister/brother has died.

Grief emerges when life continues and the survivor(s) experience

of an absent other. Biologically, death is an established fact of human

life; relationally death is not. The story of sibling life changes after one of

them dies. The nuances of what changed emerged only after grief

presented itself in their lives. The story of grief is unique to each sibling

and unique to each sibling relationship.

Relational time is not chronological time. Initially, I did not

recognize that I held an underlying assumption about the concept of time

in this inquiry. In the creation of my inquiry, my original concept had

been to seek the stories of experience as identified by the participants. I

had assumed this would be told about a retrospective narrative of the

experience. The question, "What is the lived experience after the death of

a sibling?" in a storied format unfolds from the storyteller.

Each of the conversational partners shared stories that were

neither retrospective nor chronological in nature. As the inquiry unfolded,

I came to understand that stories that had deep and long-lasting

relationships did not function on chronological time. Chronology is a

linear concept that identifies sequential events that are discrete and

orderly, such as time. In each of the stories told by my conversational

partners there was no linear sequence, yet there was a significance in the

arrangement of the story as it unfolded. It seemed that personal stories

have a relational time that follows a design more situated to a circularity

of emotional and physical essence. I became curious as to how the

concept of time played out in each of the stories. Each sibling provided

responses to my questions related to a fact such as, "What was the age

difference between you? "How old were you when [name of sibling]

died?" As each story unfolded, it became apparent that grief stories

cannot be told in a chronological manner. The stories did not unfold per a

format that began at birth and moved up through developmental phases

and shared histories nor did stories show up as beginning from the death

and moving backward through memory.

There was a fluidity and aliveness with each narrative told by a

bereaved sibling. I came to understand that relational time referenced the

significance of what was relevant to the storytellers in their identification

of the lived experiences that braided their sense of self to another.

Siblings create the bridge for the transforming family story.

This was a surprise learning in its consistency and in detail. One of the

salient characteristics of the experience of each of the conversational

partners was the transforming family story. The stories moved beyond the

family of origin into the family of present, which belonged to each

bereaved sibling and his or her current family structure, which I categorized as the family of present. This family unit contained the surviving siblings, their partners, and their children. The stories then moved across generational time into the family of future, which consisted of children currently existing in the present system. These children were identified in the positions of niece/nephew and grandchild of the deceased sister or brother. I categorized these members as the family of future. They are the builders of future family systems.

There is a flow of family story transmuting through time in story as it is shared and retold over and over by other members attached to the family unit. This discovery occurred across all the stories shared by each sibling. In each story told, there was a deliberate narrative of the family footprint that involved the family of origin history, as well as culture, which produced a coherent story of family knowledge. All storytellers had narratives that they began to link as the story unfolded. The narrative that became linked was specific to the deceased sibling either in characteristics or in shared experiences. As the storyteller gathered this information, they also told of another ongoing process in the story, that being the deliberate connection and communication with the children and grandchildren.

In a bid to gain clarity, I began to compare this puzzling

phenomenon to the metaphor of gardening. In gardening, a first step to

healthy experience begins with gathering of seeds; the second step is to

plant the seed in healthy soil; the third step is to nurture the seedling. The

fourth step is to admire the creation of leaves and flowers; the fifth step is

to enjoy the sensory delights of a healthy fruit bearing plant, while the

circle of life begins to complete and sends the ending of the flower to

sprinkle its seeds on the ground. The parallel process of this metaphor

allowed me to understand that it is the sibling relationship that creates a

relational bridge for the family story to move from the family of origin to

the family of present and then to the family of future. In this inquiry, each

conversational partner told a story that gave voice to his or her deceased

sibling.

The social process of the linking stories served an evolutionary

function for the larger family story, which in turn becomes a story about

the family of present and the family of future. This is the relational aspect

of social processes that are experienced in a significant change story such

as grief. Each of the conversational partners spontaneously brought forth

a continuing story that supported the changed autobiography of the

deceased sibling and their presence in the sibling system. In each of the

stories, there was a narrative that identified what aspects of their

deceased sibling's life story was integral knowledge. This biographical

knowledge was deliberately shared with family members and specifically

with the children and grandchildren of the deceased sibling.

  In search of context with the existing knowledge. Each of the

articles identified in the existing literature shares the commonality of

attempting to describe and support acquisition of knowledge in a difficult

human experience of death and grief. Existing literature on attachment

theory and how attachment plays out in the landscape of relationships

continues to be in the foreground of contemporary research and opinion.

Attachment is defined as having a biological causation which was not

explored in my inquiry (Bowlby,1980; Bretherton 1992; Kosminsky &

Jordan, 2016; Parkes,1978, 2016).

  The influence of other stories in the lived experience is found in

the early writing of Burton (1638/2004). He wrote about the vast life

experiences that impacted human lives by causing death. Burton then

described the changed experience of lived life for the surviving person

and identified the intensity of melancholy. The *Anatomy of Melancholy*

was written as prose, and the content was delivered by the fictitious voice

of the main character (Burton, 1638/2004). It was a performative style of

communication and resonated as a story that had its own energy and life.

The external voices of the poets that I included with the retold stories (see

Appendix E) resonate with other voices in the description of a deeply

held grief experience. Milton (1963/1982) and Tennyson (1849/1992)

described the experience of lived grief and did not analyze grief. These

articles resonated with my first discovery that grief is influenced by other

stories. In addition, the underlying thread in these specific external

narratives is the capacity to subjectively share a grief story with both

internal and external listeners.

My second discovery of shock is that the response resonates with

findings in the reviewed research on grief experienced by siblings. The

death of a sibling has been researched and written about from the

developmental stages of young children, adolescents, young adults, and

middle-aged adults (Charles & Charles, 2006; Davies, 1993; Hogan &

DeSantis, 1996; Marshall & Davies, 2011; Packman et al., 2006;

VanVolkam, 2006). There was some understanding of grief that I arrived

at based on the earlier research that involved younger siblings. Davies

(1993) noted that children and adolescents described the death of a

sibling as surprising. Each of my conversational partners had identified

an experience of shock when their sibling died. This occurred even when

there was prior knowledge of a terminal illness. The idea of shock as

described by the conversational partners may hold elements of surprise.

The story of shock as the response expands the bereaved experience of

siblings from childhood through the ages to the senior sibling systems.

This story informs the reader that age is not a gateway to sibling grief, as

a sense of surprise or shock occurred across the ages of sibling

relationships. The idea that older aged people are less impacted by death

perhaps belongs to a mythological construct.

There were several inquiries that were similar to my inquiry.

Marshall (2009) created a narrative inquiry to explore adult sibling grief.

Her inquiry also incorporated her personal experience of being a

bereaved sibling. Her findings suggest that adult siblings experience

disenfranchised grief. Disenfranchised grief is defined as

unacknowledged grief from external others (Doka, 2002). In the stories

shared in this inquiry, I did not find any attribution of a disenfranchised

experience. This does not preclude the possibility of other adult siblings

having an experience of disenfranchisement. It does identify the different

outcomes that can be active in a narrative inquiry with comparable design

and a generalized definition of age such as adulthood.

The inquiry completed by Moss and Moss (1989) was the closest to my inquiry. My inquiry was not designed to replicate this study. I did not become aware that this specific study existed until well after I had completed the interviews with my conversational partners. Upon reviewing this work, I was struck by both the similarities and the differences that occurred between the major learnings in my inquiry and what Moss and Moss found. The similarities began with the selected population being older siblings and those who were at least 60 years of age when they were interviewed. Moss and Moss (1989) presented "seven dimensions" (p. 97–100) that they utilized in their inquiry. There were five that might be considered similar; those being interaction, instrumental and emotional support, socialization, positive and negative affect, and family identity.

As I reflected on the five dimensions that seemed similar, I did find a corresponding definition in several of the themes that came forth from my inquiry. In the stories told by my conversational partners each of them acknowledged being aware that their sibling was no longer available to engage with them socially, or emotionally. The three dimensions that Moss and Moss identified were interaction, emotional support, and socialization. I heard possibilities of instrumental in the

sibling stories when they referred to what their sibling had done for them

in their lives. One example is when Anne identified that her brother Peter

had supported to leave a negative relationship. A second example

occurred with Marlow as she identified her brother Brian as functioned as

the person who connected her with their family.

A well-founded similarity that the two studies shared as a major

finding is that older siblings are impacted when they experience the death

of a sibling. Moss and Moss (1989) described the family systems as

remaining constant over the life cycle. In my inquiry, I found that the

story of family systems changed over the life cycle of the siblings. I also

found that the bereaved siblings encouraged the story of their deceased

sibling to be told for the future generations.

The methodology that I used was different from the methodology

that Moss and Moss (1989) incorporated in their study. I focused on the

relational story of grief in a sibling system. The relational story was the

unit for critical thought in this narrative oriented inquiry. My questions

were generative in nature, and my prompts were reflective of supporting

the bereaved sibling as a storyteller.

Difference in methodology played an important role in the

acquisition of shared knowledge from my inquiry to other research. As an

example, there were several longitudinal studies that focused on the

singular idea of emphasizing the state of mind or health of an individual

(Cicirelli, 2009; Lalive D'Epinay et al., 2009; Rosendahl et al., 2013).

The section of research specific to sibling systems that at minimum

identified a process of grief was located in research that was specific to a

younger aged sibling cohort (Davies, 1993; Hogan & DeSantis, 1996;

Laverty, 2014; Marshall, 2009; Marshall & Davies, 2011; Moss & Moss

1989; McGowan & Davis 2011). The primary orientation of my inquiry

explored the relational context of lived experience as expressed through

the stories told by bereaved siblings.

Sibling relationships are integral to mental and physical health

(O'Bryant, 1988; Ryan & Willits, 2007). In the research on sibling

systems across the ages from childhood to middle-aged adulthood, an

ongoing relationship in some form with the deceased sibling has been

identified as contributing to the well-being of the surviving sibling

(Charles & Charles, 2006; Davies 2003; Hogan & DeSantis, 1996). The

identification of continuing bonds was a significant construct in

recognizing that death does not automatically end a relationship (Klass et

al., 1996).

The discovery in this inquiry that mature siblings are deliberate in ensuring that the story of a deceased sibling is kept alive in the generational family story recognizes the point of continuation. Siblings create the bridge for the transforming family story. This discovery confirms the knowledge that there is a continued relationship. My discovery identifies an integral process that siblings engage in the dynamic transformation of a continually emerging family story over generations.

The discovery in this inquiry that does not seem to be identified in prior research is that relational time is not chronological. The knowledge that significant stories in the journey of a grief story are told from the orientation of relational time and not chronological time is a new emergent learning.

Limitations

A main limitation of the inquiry occurred with the necessity of repeating two of the interviews. When I created this inquiry, I wanted to capture the stories told by the siblings in a singular conversation. A delimitation is that I chose to interview five people, all of whom were bereaved siblings. I selected five because I wanted to experience their stories in a thorough way and could engage in deep reflection.

In a qualitative inquiry, major discoveries can be interpreted differently depending on the orientation and perspective of other readers and researchers. The unique learnings of my inquiry are no exception to this possibility. As in any narrative inquiry, the story is never final and is open to emergent possibilities.

Clinical Implications

Although this inquiry was not directed to specifically address the work of clinicians, my results provide information that would be appropriate for clinicians to consider. The discoveries contribute to an enhanced awareness when working with adult clients or mature family systems.

The first implication is directly related to a family system's assessment. My recommendation is that during the assessment for new clients, a question about adult sibling status and history be incorporated. This is particularly important when assessing adult clients. Assessments tend to focus on the individual client and his or her presenting concern. When an assessment is deepened to query the experience of relationships which at a certain age tend to include only spouse and children, there is a missed opportunity to identify the status of adult sibling relationships. Death as an agent of change sets up a new and often unfamiliar plot.

The second clinical aspect for clinicians is to have an increased awareness of mature sibling relations. Information about mature sibling relationships is scarce and not readily available for the clinician. Sibling relationships are often long lasting and primary. Increasing awareness provides a context of clinical knowledge, which leads to deliberate therapeutic strategies. When supporting a bereaved sibling, it is imperative to incorporate the knowledge that an adult sibling system is the relational bridge that reaches back to the family system of origin through the family system of present into the family of future. Rather than focus on the individual in the room as a single entity, it is beneficial to open the possibilities of experience that reflects the interacting system.

Grief as a story has interwoven threads of other stories, which means that clinicians may be listening to something that is not immediately recognized as grief. Grief is a singular word that invites the story of relational process. Grief is the relational process of the lived experience with death. This is a prompt to explore the possibility of other stories having a bigger role in life experience for the client or family system. An example of this is when Marlow told her story of grief and during the telling came to recognize that the death of her brother left her feeling and thinking about her life in the comparison of being an orphan.

The idea of orphan was the metaphor that became the container for the

nonverbalized sense of the absence of family. Orphan became a segue

into the deeper realization that Brian had been the bridge of presence and

communication for Marlow to her siblings when she had originally left

her hometown shortly after the earlier death of another brother several

decades prior.

A different example of external story lies in the story of Paul and

Robert. Initially the story was focused on why Paul had rejected his

younger brother for several decades and then on the joy of reconnecting.

The external story of the Pied Piper policy for British children during

World War II had a deep influence on Paul's capacity to create

relationships with others. Paul had described as it "I was evacuated, sent

away." I was curious as to the impact of this decision on young children

as they returned to their families after having been forced to live with

strangers during an anxious time in civilization. After I had sent Paul the

brief stories that I had located about the experience of others in his

situation, Paul identified that he had never considered that that experience

had had an impact on his adult relationships.

Clinicians often experience discrepancies between dominant,

public narratives and what is shared in a story in the therapy room. A

prime example of one discrepancy is that this inquiry identified that age

is not the criterion for grief. Therefore, it is critical to re-examine the idea

that the older a person is the more experience he or she has with death,

and the experience of grief is minimal. As my client said to me many

years ago, no one had asked her about sibling deaths before, and she had

rationalized it as being that others had thought it was because she was

old.

In each of the stories shared in this inquiry, grief exists regardless

of the age of the bereaved sibling. The take away is that grief as a story

has interwoven threads of other stories. Clinicians may be listening to

something that they do not immediately recognize. It is wise to trust the

process of the storyteller as the story of grief emerges in its own unique

design.

Future Research

Overall, I recommend that further inquiries be conducted to

contribute to current literature on grief and bereavement, with an

emphasis on family systems and specifically with older adult sibling

relationships.

My recommendations for further research are in three specific

areas. The first two areas are specific to research while the third area is in

clinical practice. The first area for further research is with older sibling

relationships to increase knowledge about the maturing of siblings in

multigenerational family systems. Second, further investigation is needed

about mature siblings and the relational impact experienced by the death

of a sibling. I recommend that additional inquiries be directed toward

enlarging the currently existing literature on grief and bereavement. The

third area is a call to focus on contributing to the development of clinical

strategies and information about older sibling systems. I specifically

recommend that inquires be focused on the relational implications of

death and the consequential lived experience for older siblings.

Following is the epilogue to this inquiry. It contains my personal

reflections on my experience and the knowledge gathered from this

inquiry.

Epilogue

"No one leaves a narrative inquiry unchanged" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 201). The story that began this inquiry occurred several years ago in my experience as a clinician. As I had shared earlier, a former client had stated to me that "nobody has ever asked me about my sister. I guess they assume . . . I'm old . . . and it doesn't matter. Or maybe I shouldn't feel this way" (personal communication, February 2009). I watched as her eyes filled with tears and between sobs, she shared that her older sister had died 2 years prior. As the reader may recognize, I am ending my dissertation with the same words that I started with in this inquiry. The details that occurred behind this quote were that I had noticed her take a deep breath and that her body had a spontaneous shudder. I felt her story before I heard it—an affective and physical response—and then her tears and the sobs. It was evident to me that there was something there that she did not have words for yet. Silence is normal when one is unable to give voice to an experience.

My experience as a clinician had already taught me that knowledge does not equal understanding. What I did not understand until after I had completed this inquiry was that in those shared moments in the room, I had recognized the beginning of a grief story before I heard it.

Maybe I had recognized the grief because I was a bereaved sibling. Yet, it happened to me as an inquirer, each time I engaged with one of my conversational partners. I had knowledge about their bereavement, yet I found myself totally captivated by their stories. The time we shared together flew by. I was puzzled by how entranced I became with each story told. What I came to know about a lived grief experience is that it contains a simultaneous sense of an emergent story of beloved siblings who are forever young and forever changed with death.

As I listened to the taped conversations, I recognized that I was not only listening to a story being told to me, I was also listening to myself as an active listener and participant in the story. It was a surreal sense of the understanding that I discovered in being an inquirer. As an inquirer, I grew into the position.

Each chapter of this dissertation contains a distinct learning journey that I told in a storied format. Each story told to me by a bereaved sibling joined with my story. Each time a bereaved sibling asked me a question or shared a nonverbalized communication, we exchanged information with each other, and my responses began to grow in their stories. Similar to my personal transformation, my conversational

partners also experienced a transformation that is demonstrated by their written comments addressed to me.

I spent months with each of the stories reviewing them by listening to the taped versions and working with the transcripts that brought the story into a written version. I noticed themes. I was frustrated at times when I could not capture my critical thought process about a story or a theme. Sometimes I had fast glimmers of thoughts but could not seize them fast enough to write sentences down. I held onto the words of Frank (2010) when he wrote, "Listen and wait. You won't get it before you are ready, but readiness is an active achievement, including the achievement of patience" (p. 108). The stories came alive as I explored each of them through the lens of dialogical narrative analysis (Frank, 2010, 2012). I noticed how each of the stories told by my conversational partners began to fit together and provided links for my emerging story, now referred to as my dissertation.

I am grateful to have found the work of Clandinin (2013) before I began my inquiry. Clandinin provided a full explanation of the explicit and nuanced procedural aspects of being involved in a narrative inquiry. Using the two different sources of narrative methodology enriched my

novice experience as a narrative inquirer and guided me into a comprehensive experience.

I began this inquiry by asking, "What is the lived experience of a bereaved sibling?" My focus was on the ordinary experience. I was deliberate in creating a singular opportunity to share conversation as a way to reflect the day-to-day storytelling. The what in the question opened the venue for me to hear multiple possibilities.

I found the experience to be rich in sharing the stories with my conversational partners. I became aware that any time an emotion, a silence, or a verbally recognized insight occurred, there was a shift in the story. I came to recognize that these shifts are how ordinary moments became extraordinary moments in life experience. This is the process of how other stories emerged in this dissertation.

After concluding this dissertation, I have become aware of three influences that impacted my process in this inquiry. The first influence is my own experience as a bereaved sibling. In this dissertation, I have had the privilege of being the listener to other bereaved sibling stories. I have been personally enriched by engaging with other bereaved siblings. The second influence is my knowledge and my active role as a clinician. As a clinician, I have come to comprehend the importance of deliberately

creating opportunities for older siblings to identify their sibling

relationships as primary. Clinicians do not always have the advantage of

time to listen to a detailed story in one session. The third influence

occurred in my position as an inquirer. I have learned details about the in-

depth process of narrative inquiry and the commitment demanded to

fulfill the complete project. In the position of inquirer, I had the

advantage to truly listen to the stories unfold and to get to know the

stories shared in this dissertation in detail.

References

Attig, T. (1996). *How we grieve: Relearning the world.* New York, NY:

   Oxford University Press.

Attig, T. (2004). Meanings of death through the lens of grieving. *Death

   Studies*, *28*, 341–360.

   http://doi.org/10.1080/07481/180490432333

Becvar, D. (1997). *Soul healing*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Becvar, D. (2003). Introduction to the special section: Death, dying and

   bereavement. *Journal of Martial & Family Therapy, 29*(4), 437–

   438. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2003.tb01686.x

Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing your qualitative

   dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end.* Thousand Oaks,

   CA: Sage.

Bowlby J. (1980). *Attachment and loss: Vol 3: Loss, sadness and

   depression.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bopp, J., Bopp, M. Brown, L., & Lane, Jr., P. (1985) *The sacred tree:

   Reflections on native American spirituality.* Twin Lakes, WI:

   Lotus Light.

Breen, L. J., & O'Connor, M. (2011). Family and social networks after

    bereavement: Experiences of support, change and isolation.

    Journal of Family Therapy, *33*, 98–120.

    http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6427.2010.00495

Bretherton, I. (1992). The origins of attachment theory: John Bowlby and

    Mary Ainsworth. In R. Parke, P. Ornstien, J. Resiser, & C. Zahn-

    Waxler (Eds.), *A century of developmental psychology* (pp. 431–

    471). Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ453419)

Brown, F. H., (1988). The impact of death and serious illness on the

    family life cycle. In B. Cartier & M. McGoldrick (Eds.), *The*

    changing family life cycle (2nd ed.; pp. 457–482), New York:

    NY: Gardner Press.

Burton, R. (2004). *The anatomy of melancholy.* Project Gutenberg E

    book #10800. (Original work published in 1638).

Burton, Robert. (1955). In *Universal Standard Encyclopedia* (Vol. 4).

    New York, NY: Unicorn.

Carter, B., & McGoldrick, M. (1988). *The changing family life cycle*: *A*

    framework for family therapy (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Gardner

    Press.

Charles, D. R., & Charles, M. (2006). Sibling loss and attachment style:

An exploratory study. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, *23*(1), 72–90.

http://doi.org/10.1037/0736-9735.23.1.72

Cicirelli, V. G. (2009). Sibling death and death fear in relation to

depressive symptomology in older adults. *Journal of

Gerontology: Psychological Sciences, 64B*(1), 24–32.

http://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbn024

Clandinin, D. J. (2013)*. Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Walnut Creek,

CA: Left Coast Press.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry experience

and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-

Bass.

Corr, C. A. (2002). Revisiting the concept of disenfranchised grief. In K.

Doka (Ed.), *Disenfranchised grief* (pp. 39–60). Champaign, IL:

Research Press.

Cowan, T. (1999). *Shamanism: As a spiritual practice for daily life.*

Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing

among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Darwin, C. (1899). *The expression of the emotions in man and animals*

[Digitized version]. Retrieved from

https://archive.org/details/expressionofemot1872darw

Davies, B. (1993). Sibling bereavement: Research guidelines for nurses.

Seminar in Oncology Nursing, 9(2), 107–113. doi:0749-

2081/93/0902-0006$5.00/0

Deeter, D. E. (2013, January). The mysterious disappearance of siblings

in grief across the lifespan. *ADEC Forum*, *39*.

http://doi.org/10.1080/03069880801926442

Deeter, D. E. (2014, June). *Expanding the concept of sibling grief to

senior adulthood*. Paper presented at the 10th International

Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society:

East Meets West, Hong Kong, China.

Deeter, D.E. (2015, October). *Expanding the concept of sibling grief to

senior adulthood*. Workshop presented at the 26th Annual

Palliative Education & Research Days; Time to Talk About

Palliative Care & End of Life Care, Edmonton, Canada.

Deeter, D. E. (2016, January). *Walking the grief journey with senior siblings*. Paper presented at the 2nd International Conference on Loss, Bereavement & Human Resilience in Israel and the World: Facts, Insights & Implications, Eilat, Israel.

Doka, K. J. (2002.) *Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges strategies for practice*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Foss, S. K. & Waters, W. (2007). *Destination dissertation: A traveler's guide to a done dissertation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Frank, A. W. (2005). What is dialogical research, and why should we do it? *Qualitative Health Research*, *15*, 964–974. http://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305279078

Frank, A. W. (2010). *Letting stories breathe: A socio-narratology*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Frank, A.W. (2012). Practicing narrative dialogical analysis. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Varieties of narrative analysis* (pp. 32–52). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Freud, S. (1917). *Mourning and melancholia* [Digitized version]. Retrieved from http://www. english.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud_MourningAnd Melancholia.pdf

Gergen, K. J. (2000). *The saturated self: Dilemmas of identity in contemporary life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gergen, K. (2009). *Relational being: Beyond self and community*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. (2008). *Social construction: Entering the dialogue*. Chargin Falls, OH: Taos Institute of Publication.

Gibran, K. (1971). *The prophet.* New York, NY: Random House. (Original work published 1923)

Granek, L. (2010). Grief as pathology: The evolution of grief theory in psychology from Freud to present. *History of Psychology*, *13*(1), 46–73. http://doi.org/10.1037/a0016991

Grief. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster online dictionary.* Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/grief?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source =jsonld

Hogan, N., & DeSantis, L. (1996). Basic constructs of a theory of adolescent sibling bereavement. In D. Klass, P. Silverman, & S. L. Nickman (Eds.), *Continuing bonds: New understandings of grief* (pp. 235–252). New York, NY: Routledge.

Klein, M. (1991). Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states. In

      R. V. Frankiel (Ed.), *Essential papers on object loss* (pp. 95–122).

      New York, NY: New York University Press. (Original work

      published 1940)

Kosminsky, P., & Jordan, J. (2016). *Attachment informed grief therapy:*

      The clinician's guide to foundational applications. New York,

      NY: Routledge.

Kramer, L., & Bank, L. (2005). Sibling relationship contributions to

      individual and family well-being: Introduction to the special

      issue. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *19*(4), 483–485.

      http://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.19.4.483

Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York, NY:

      MacMillan.

Lalive d'Epinay, C. J., Cavalli, S., & Guillet, L. A. (2009). Bereavement

      in very old age: Impact on health and the relationships of the loss

      of a spouse, a child, a sibling, or a close friend. *Omega, Journal*

      of Death and Dying, *60*(4), 301–325.

      http://doi.org/10.2190/om.60.4.a

Launer, J. (2005). Anna O and the "talking cure." *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine*. *98*(6), 465–466. http://doi.org/10.1093/qimed/hci068

Laverty, A. (2014, June 13). *Adult sibling bereavement*. Paper presented at the 10th International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society in 2014, Hong Kong.

Lindemann, E. (1944). Symptomology and management of acute grief. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *101*(1944), 141–148. http://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.101.2.141

Luttichau, C. (2009). *Animal spirit guides*. New York: NY: CICO Books.

Marshall, B. J. (2009). *Silent grief: Narratives of bereaved adult siblings* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Toronto. Retrieved from https://tspace.library.utoronto .ca/bitstream /1807/19153/6/Marshall_Brenda_J_200911_PhD_thesis.pdf

Marshall, B. J., & Davies, B. (2011). Bereavement in children and adults following the death of a sibling. In R. Neimeyer, D. L. Harris, H. R. Winokuer, & G. F. Thornton (Eds.), *Grief and bereavement in contemporary society bridging research and practice* (pp. 107–116). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Mason, E. (2014, January). On the same side: Homosexuals during the
Second World War. *BBC History Magazine*. Retrieved from
http://www.historyextra.com feature

McGoldrick, M., Gerson, R., & Shellenberger, S. (1999). *Genograms
assessment and intervention* (2nd ed.). New York: NY: Norton.

McGowan, D. E., & Davies, B. (1997). Patterns of grief in young
children following the death of a sibling. *Death Studies*, *19*(1),
41–53. http://doi.org/10.1080/07481189508252712

McNamee, S., & Hosking, D. M. (2012). *Research and social change a
relational constructionist approach*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Milton, J. (1982). Methought I saw my late espoused saint. In M. J.
Moffat (Ed.), *In the midst of winter: Selections from the literature
of mourning* (p. 202). New York, NY: Random House. (Original
work published 1673)

Moss, S. Z., & Moss, M. S. (1989). The impact of the death of an elderly
sibling: Some considerations of a normative loss. *American
Behavioural Scientist*, *33*(1), 94–106.
http://doi.org/10.1177/0002764289033001009

Nadeau, J. W. (2001). Meaning making in family bereavement: A family systems approach. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, W. Strobe, & H. Schut (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping, and care* (pp. 329–347). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Nadeau, J. W. (2002). *Family construction of meaning*. In R. A. Neimeyer (Ed.), *Meaning reconstruction & the experience of loss* (pp. 95–111). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Nadeau, J. W. (2006). Metaphorically speaking: The use of metaphors in grief therapy. *Illness Crisis & Loss*, *14*(3), 201–221. http://doi.org/10.1177/105413730601400301

Neimeyer, R. A. (2002). The language of loss: Grief therapy as a process of meaning reconstruction. In R. A. Neimeyer (Ed.), *Meaning reconstruction & the experience of loss* (pp. 261–292). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Neimeyer, R. A. (2013, October 25). Grief and the quest for meaning: The spiritual arc of tragic loss [Workshop]. The Good Samaritan Society. Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada.

Neimeyer, R. A. (2016, January 12). *Intervening in meaning: New directions in grief therapy*. Paper presented at 2nd International Conference on Loss, Bereavement & Human Resilience in Israel and the world: Facts, Insights & Implications, Eilat, Israel.

Niebuhr, G. (1999, September 18). Hell is getting a makeover from Catholics; Jesuits call it a painful state but not a sulfurous place. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/1999/09/18/arts/hell-getting-makeover-catholics--jesuits-call-it-painful-state-but-not-sulfurous.html

O'Bryant, S. L. (1988). Sibling support and older widows' well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *50*(1), 173–183. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable352437

O'Leary, J. M., & Gaziano, C. (2011, Spring). Sibling grief after perinatal loss. *Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health, 25*(3), 171–191. Retrieved from http://momenough.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Sibling-Grief-after-perinatal-loss.pdf

Packman, W., Horsley, H., Davies, B., & Kramer, R. (2006). Sibling

 bereavement and continuing bonds. *Death Studies*, *30*, 817–840.

 http://doi.org/10.1080

 /107481180600886603

Pare, D. A. (1995). Of families and other cultures: The shifting paradigm

 of family therapy. *Family Process*, *34*(1), 1–19. Retrieved from

 www.glebeinstitute.com/writings/html

Parkes, C. M. (1978). *Bereavement studies of grief in adult life*.

 Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.

Parkes, C. M. (1985). Review article: Bereavement. *British Journal of*

 Psychiatry, *146*, 11–17. http://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.146.1.11.DO

Parkes, C. M. (2011). The historical landscape of loss: Development of

 bereavement studies. In R. A. Neimeyer, D. L. Harris, H. R.

 Winokuer, & G. F. Thornton (Eds.), *Grief and bereavement in*

 contemporary society: Bridging research and practice (pp. 2–5).

 New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Parkes, C. M. (2016, January 14). *Looking back and looking forward*.

 Paper presented at the 2nd International Conference on Loss,

 Bereavement & Human Resilience in Israel & the World: Facts,

 Insights & Implications, Eilat, Israel.

Robinson, L. (2001). Adult grief reactions following a sibling's death from AIDS. *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*, *12*(2), 25–32. http://doi.org/10.1016/s1055-3290(06)60131-3

Rosendahl, S. P., Bulow, P., & Bjorklund, A. (2013). Images of sorrow-experiences of losing a co-twin in old age. *Health*, *5*(12A), 64–73. http://doi.org/10.4236/health.2013.512A009

Ryan, A. K., & Willits, F. K. (2007, December). Family ties, physical health, and psychological well-being. *Journal of Aging and Health*, *19*, 907–920. http://doi.org/10.1177/1089826443073083400

Sermijn, J., & Loots, G. (2015). Editorial: The creation of crazy Patchworks; Becoming rhizomatic in systemic therapy. *Family Process*, *54*(3), 533–544. http://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12119

Shand, A. F. (1914). *The foundations of character: Being a study of the tendencies of the emotions and sentiments* [Digitized version]. Retrieved from https://archive.org /details/foundationsofcha00shanuoft

Shorter, E. (2009). Darwin's contribution to psychiatry. *The British Journal of Psychiatry. 195*(6), 473–474. http://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.109.072116

Silverman, P. R.., & Klass, D. (1996). Introduction: What's the problem?

    In D. Klass, P. R. Silverman, & S. L. Nickman (Eds.), *Continuing*

    bonds: New understandings of grief (pp 3–23). New York, NY:

    Routledge.

Silverman, P. R., & Nickman, S. L. (1996). Concluding thoughts. In D.

    Klass, P. R. Silverman, & S. L. Nickman (Eds.), *Continuing*

    bonds: New understandings of grief (pp. 349–354), New York,

    NY: Routledge.

Sowers, K. M., & Rowe, W. S. (2007). Global aging. In J. A. Blackburn

    & C. N. Dulmus (Eds.), *Handbook of gerontology: Evidenced-*

    based approaches to theory, practice and policy (pp. 3–16).

    Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Sprenkle, D. H., & Piercy, F. P. (Eds.). (2005). *Research methods in*

    family research. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Stroebe, M., Gergen, M., Gergen, K., & Stroebe, W. (1997). Broken

    hearts or broken bonds? In D. Klass, P. R. Silverman, & S. L.

    Nickman (Eds.), *Continuing bonds: New understandings of grief*

    (pp. 31–43). New York, NY: Routledge.

Stroebe, M., Schut, H., & Borner, K. (2010). Continuing bonds in

adaptation to bereavement: Toward theoretical integration.

Clinical Psychology Review, 30(2010), 259–268.

http://doi.org/10.1016./i.cdr.2009.11.007

Summers, J. (2011, March 12). When the children came home: Stories of

wartime evacuees. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from

www.theguardian.com/lifestyle/2011/mar/12/children-evacuation-

london-second-world-war

Taylor, M. F, Clark, N., & Newton, E. (2008). Counselling Australian

baby boomers: Examining the loss and grief issues facing aging

distance-separated sibling dyads. *British Journal of Guidance and

Counselling*, *36*(2), 189–204.

http://doi.org/10.1080/03069880801926442

Tennyson, A. (1982). In memoriam A. H. H. In M. J. Moffat (Ed.), *In the

midst of winter: Selections from the literature of mourning* (p.

192). New York, NY: Random House. (Original work published

1849)

Thornton, G., & Zanich, M. L. (2002). Empirical assessment of

     disenfranchised grief: 1989–2000. In K. J. Doka (Ed.),

     Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges, and strategies

     for practice (pp. 79–89). Champaign, IL: Research Press

VanVolkam, M. (2006). Sibling relationships in middle and older

     adulthood. *Marriage & Family Review*, *40*(2/3), 151–170.

     http://doi.org/10.1300/J002y40n02-08

Walsh, F., & McGoldrick, M. (2013). Bereavement: A family life cycle

     perspective. *Family Science*, *4*(1), 20–27.

     http://doi.org/10.1080/19424620.2013.819228

Wray, T. J. (2003). *Surviving the death of a sibling living through grief*

     when an adult brother or sister dies. New York, NY: Three

     Rivers Press.

Wright, K. (2003). Relationships with death: The terminally ill talk about

     dying. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *29*(4), 439–454.

     http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2003.tb01687.x

Wright, P. M., & Hogan, N. S. (2008). Grief theories and models:

     Applications to hospice nursing practice. *Journal of Hospice and*

     Palliative Nursing, *10*(6), 350–356. Retrieved from

     www.researchgate.net

Appendix A: Letter of Invitation

October 2015

Hello:

I am a graduate student with the Taos Institute –Vrije Universiteit

Brussel (VUB) PhD Program. I am conducting a research project under

the supervision of Dr. Donald Sawatzky. The purpose of my research is

to explore the grief stories that adult siblings have as a result of a

sibling(s) death. My project is exploring grief from the perspective of

adult siblings aged 60 years and older when their sibling died. My

purpose in seeking stories of grief from adult siblings is that there is

limited information available about this type of grief for professionals or

for other grieving siblings.

I am sending you this letter to ask if you or anyone you may know

would be interested in participating in this research project. This project

and the resulting information gathered from it forms the basis of the work

that meets my academic program requirements for the Taos Institute-

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) PhD Program.

Eligibility Criteria for Participation

   a. You were 60 years old or older when your sibling died.

   b. It has been at least 6 months since your sibling died.

c. You will be asked to participate in conversations with me. The length of time will vary depending on you. It may encompass one or two conversations that range 60 minutes to 90 minutes in length.

d. The location of these conversations will be determined by both of us.

e. With your permission, each conversation will be recorded and transcribed. All information will be treated with confidentiality and will be stored in a locked filing system.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time. All information shared with me during our conversations will be treated with respect. In discussing any personal topic, there is always the possibility of distressing as well as positive feelings. Although I will do my best to understand your experience, I will at no time take on the role of therapist or provide opinion regarding issues that may arise.

If you, or anyone you know is interested in participating in this project or have any questions please call me at [telephone number] or email at [email address].

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Deborah Deeter, MSc., Doctoral student

Appendix B: Demographic Table of Conversational Partners

Table B1

Demographic Table of Conversational Partners

	Participants[1]				
	Anne	Cathy	Edward[2]	Paul	Marlow[2]
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female
Age (in years) at conversation	66	62	60	87	64
Age (in years) at death of sibling	61	60	60	84	63
Name and age of sibling at death	Peter Age 65	Natasha Age 63	Brian Age 69	Robert Age 74	Brian Age 69
Country of origin	Denmark	Scotland	Canada	England	Canada

[1] Names have been changed. [2] Two siblings from same family of origin.

Appendix C: Informed Consent

To Participants in this study;

I am a doctoral student in the Taos Institute/Vrije University of Brussels (VUB) PhD program. My research is in the area of grief and bereavement for siblings who are 60 years and older and have had a brother or sister die.

As part of this study you will ask to participate in an in-depth 60–90 minute interview consisting of open-ended questions related to your experience. I may ask questions for clarification, the main intent of the interview is to invite you to reflect on your loss and what it means to you now. As a participant you may benefit from the opportunity to consider how the death of your sibling(s) affected your life, but I cannot guarantee that you will find this valuable.

In discussing any personal topic there is always the possibility of distressing as well as positive feelings might be stirred up by the conversation. Although I will do my best to understand your experience, I will at no time take on the role of therapist or provide opinion regarding issues that may arise. Upon request I will provide you with a list of qualified professionals who would be able to fulfill that role for you. There should be no physical risks other than that associated with normal

daily activity. I am ethically bound however, to report to authorities any disclosure of intent to harm yourself or others, and any disclosure relating to harm for children or dependent adults.

With your permission, each interview will be both audio taped and videotaped. The interviews may be transcribed by a transcriptionist. No one except the researcher, her academic advisers and the transcriptionist will have access to the raw data. All of us are committed to confidentiality. All material will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.

My goal is to analyze the materials from your interview in order to understand how the death of your brother or sister affected you and what changes have occurred. I will be sharing material with my academic supervisors, in my dissertation paper and in my academic defence. Material from the paper may be used as a teaching aid for future presentations or in a written format, articles, or books.

In all written and oral presentations in which I use materials from your interview, I will disguise your name, any names mentioned during the interview and your place of residence. Transcripts will be typed with initials rather than names and in final form, the interview material will use pseudonyms or made-up names to protect your confidentiality.

You may at any time withdraw from the interview process. You may withdraw your consent to have specific excerpts used if you notify me. Should I wish to use materials in any way not consistent with what is stated above, I will ask you for your additional written consent. In signing this form, you are assuring me that you will make no financial claims for the use of the material in your interview material and that no psychological therapy will be expected as part of this agreement. The researcher cannot be held legally liable, personally or otherwise, in contract, or in tort.

If you have any concerns or comments resulting from your participation in this research, you may contact me at [telephone number] or my Adviser, Dr. Donald Sawatzky, at [email address].

Please call me at [telephone number] or email me at any time if you have questions or concerns.

A. I, _____have read the
   above and agree to participate as an interviewee under the
   conditions stated above.

B. I agree to allow video and or digital images or photographs in
   which I appear to be used in teaching, scientific presentations
   and/or publication with the understanding that I will not be
   identified by name. I am aware that I may withdraw this consent
   at any time without penalty.

C. _____

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

Deborah Deeter, MSc

Appendix D: Transcription Services Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement

I understand that I will be in contact with confidential information during my time working with this project. As part of the condition of my work with Deb Deeter, I hereby undertake to keep in strict confidence any information regarding any material that comes to my attention.

I also agree to never remove any confidential material of any kind from the premise unless authorized to do so.

Due to the confidential nature and the sensitive content of the material that I will be working with I agree not to disclose any information, fact or fiction that I may encounter during this project.

I agree that I will continue to treat as confidential all information that I have had access to after our working relationship has ended.

The definition of confidentiality shall apply to all material in written, verbal or visual format. No information may be disclosed in any circumstance.

I have read the above agreement and agree to abide the terms and conditions of this letter.

_____   _____

Name   Date

_____   _____

Witness   Date

Appendix E: External Literary Voices

This section is different from what might be expected in a review of relevant literature in the formation of a narrative inquiry. My purpose in this appendix is to provide the reader with a review of the literature that has impacted me in this inquiry. During the active inquiry and shared conversations with my conversational partners, there were several story lines that caught my attention.

Each time this sense of suspended thought occurred for me, I wrote down key words or phrases that had originally caught my attention as I worked with each of my conversational partners' stories. I then proceeded to research each keyword or phrase by exploring articles and books that contained a similar theme or main idea.

As my inquiry unfolded, I continued to explore additional writings that eventually brought a different voice and a deeper understanding to my inquiry. Each of these external pieces aided me in comprehending the missing knowledge that I had in the sibling stories. When I wrote the stories about each of my conversational partner's stories of grief, I did choose to include each external narrative voice that I had located. I had no expectation about the impact of the literature on their lives, other than I did not want to offend or create a negative

experience. My intent was to be transparent and authentic with my authorship of their stories. The voices of grief from the writings of poets provided a different type of context from the norm of literature review. I have included these voices as important allies in my retelling of the stories shared by my conversational partners. There are three poems that had significance for me as I retold stories about grief from the voices of their sisters and brothers. I have identified the poems according to the story told by a conversational partner.

External Literature for the Story Told by Anne

In the story told by Anne, she identified the powerful dream that had occurred. Anne reported that she had dreamed that her brother was alive and that she physically felt him. Anne stated that dream had helped her heal from the intense state of grief that contained unresolved feelings. In her telling of the dream, Anne emphasized details that had occurred including the importance of white clothing. As I pondered the intensity of her telling this aspect of her story I found a poem written by Milton. It was originally written in the 1600s and is titled "Methought I Saw My Late Espoused Saint." This poem was written as Milton (1673/1982) awoke after dreaming of his wife, Katherine Woodcock, who had recently:

Methought I saw my late espoused saint

Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,

Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,

Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.

Mine, as whom washed from spot of child-bed taint

Purification in the Old Law did save,

And such as yet once more I trust to have

Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,

Came vested all in white, pure as her mind.

Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight

Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person

Shined

So clear as in no face with more delight.

But O as to embrace me she declined,

I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night. (p. 202)

I note that the relationship of spouse is different from the relationship one might have with a sister or brother. Milton (1673/1982) identified the dream in a manner reminiscent to the way Anne narrated her experience to me. In dream, beloved ones can return to us. Is it a dream, or can people open themselves to a different way of connecting, holding connection? Milton (1673/1982) identified that in his dream, it seemed as if Katherine had been saved from dying, and he recognized her. Milton brings forth the physical reality that he experienced in his dream when he went to hold her, "but o as to embrace me she declined." (Milton, 1673/1982, p. 202) He shared his sense of delight in seeing her

until the moment he awoke and recognized that he had only been

dreaming. His full experience of grief is expressed when he stated "day

brought back my night" (Milton, 1673/1982, p. 202). Milton's short

poem is rich with metaphor that portrays a timeless sense of grief and

sorrow that was experienced in a human and non-scientific way.

External Literature for the Story Told by Cathy

In telling her story Cathy had emphasized how difficult it was to

use words that would capture the true crux of grief. Caty had identified

that she believed the Victorian era had authors who could describe grief

in a more comprehensive and descriptive language. This specific aspect

of our conversation had caught my attention as I had been pondering the

common usage of words that were used to describe grief. Following is an

excerpt from "In Memorium," a poem written by Alfred Tennyson

(1849/1992) who wrote in the Victorian era about his grief at the death of

his good friend.

V

I sometimes hold it half a sin

To put in words the grief I feel;

For words, like Nature, half reveal

And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,

A use in measured language lies;

The sad mechanic exercise,

Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,

Like coarsest clothes against the cold;

But that larger grief which these enfold. (Verse V)

This verse demonstrates the depth of Tennyson's (1849/1982)

struggle to put his lived experience of grief into language and words.

Tennyson is measured in his carefully chosen description of this

phenomenon. The use of words or communicated language does not truly

express the full experience in the depth of relational grief that is caused

from the death of a loved one. Words are not always the most accurate in

conveying the true experience that one has in a process of bereavement.

External Literature for the Story Told by Edward

In the story told by Edward, he spoke of his older Brian as being

fun and light hearted. Edward identified his grief as containing the loss of

his brother and the lightness that had also disappeared from his life. He expressed the experience of knowing this death as a tragedy.

Gibran (1923/1971) articulated a similar idea of joy and sorrow being held and experienced in the same moment, each emotion and story juxtaposed on to the other. Following is the full poem:

On Joy and Sorrow

Then a woman said, Speak to us of Joy and Sorrow.

And he answered;

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.

And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.

And how else can it be?

The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.

Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?

And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?

When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow," and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."

But I say unto you, they are inseparable.

Together they come, and when one sits alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.

Verily, you are suspended like scales between your sorrow and your joy.

Only when you are empty are you at a standstill and balanced.

When the treasure-keeper lifts you to weigh his gold and silver, needs must your joy or your sorrow rise or fall.