

1996

# Bereavement and moral and spiritual development : an exploration of the experiences of children and young people

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/2185>

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/4704>

University of Plymouth

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**REFERENCE ONLY**

**BEREAVEMENT AND MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT:  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE**

**VALERIE CLARK**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfilment  
for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Department of Humanities and Cultural Interpretation**

**Faculty of Arts and Education**

**University of Plymouth**

**April 1996**

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**In memory of my father**

**SIDNEY HARRY CLARK**

**1917 - 1995**

**who died during the course of this research**

## **ABSTRACT**

**VALERIE CLARK**

### **BEREAVEMENT AND MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

This thesis, which is in two parts, attempts to interpret in moral and spiritual terms those responses to bereavement that are often described as psychological. In part one human development is considered comparing religious, philosophical, scientific and psychological theories and a model of the 'core self' is proposed (body, mind and emotions) which responds to social and cultural influences in ways that can be considered moral and spiritual. Theories of duty, consequence and virtue are considered as well as Kohlberg's theory of justice reasoning and Gilligan's views about caring. Within spirituality notions of dualism and continuity-discontinuity are noted and a tripartite view of spirituality as human, devotional and practical is proposed. The notion of stages in both moral and spiritual development is dismissed in favour of a model of inter-relatedness and inter-connectedness, and a bereavement model of adaptation is also suggested to describe the process of grieving which is likened to development.

Part two describes the research methods used to obtain data from 169 respondents: 28 children (5-11 years), 99 young people (11-18 years) and 42 adults, including key interviews with four 16/17 year old girls whose parent and/or sibling had died. Respondents discuss traditional religious beliefs and practices; the concept of a loving and/or just God; having a sense of the presence of the deceased; spiritualism and near-death experiences; 'living for the moment'; increased awareness of and empathy with other grieving people; constraints on hurting or harming people; valuing of life itself; funeral attendance, and the response of school staff to bereaved pupils.

This study highlights the need for initial teacher training and ongoing INSET on bereavement issues and suggests that research is needed concerning pupil and staff opinions and experiences, and evaluation of school policies. The establishment of an educational centre for resources and information on loss, death and bereavement is also proposed.

**BEREAVEMENT AND MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT:  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to thank the following people for their involvement in the research and writing of this thesis.

My Director of Studies, Mark Halstead: for his consistent and unobtrusive support and the way in which he enabled me to investigate and synthesize many areas of study.

Andy Hannan and Jeff Lewis: for their ongoing help and advice in both practical and academic ways.

The respondents: pupils at Hester Primary School and Maxwell Secondary School; delegates at the 'Sea Of Faith' conference; students on the 1993/4 PGCE course and children of colleagues and friends. Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity, my four key respondents: for their willingness to share their stories with me.

Fiona for introducing me to Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity; my contact at Maxwell Secondary School, and the headteacher and staff at Hester Primary School.

Staff in Library and Media Services who gave me help and advice when I needed it: particularly Clive Anscott, Rosemary Smith, Dave Thornley, Michael Webb and Sue White.

Liz Turner: for undertaking some transcribing when I could do no more.

Karen Sommerfield: for helpful and patient problem-solving advice.

Colleagues who have supported me by sharing ideas, time and social activities: Kath Bainbridge, Ian Dalglish, Sarah Davies, Misri Dey, John Dibbo, Chris Ellis, Terry Enright, John Gulliver, Denis Hayes, David Holt, Teri-Anne Hornby, Dan Lane, Chris Lee, Andy Merryfield, Keith Palmer, Robin Peel, Simon Rippingale, Sue Shorman, Victor Ukaegbu, Amy Williams, Matloob ali Zaidi - and especially Jeannette Gill.

## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has Valerie Clark been registered for any other University award.

This study was financed with the aid of a studentship from the University of Plymouth to work on a project located within the RIMSCUE centre (Research into Moral, Spiritual, Cultural Understanding and Education).

A programme of advanced study was undertaken which included attendance at Post Graduate Diploma in Education/Master of Education research seminars.

Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended and contacts made with appropriate researchers, lecturers and counsellors at other institutions. The first two issues of SPES (a magazine for the study of spiritual, moral and cultural values in education) were edited.

### **Publications:**

Clark, V. & Halstead, M. (1994) 'Report on National Conference on Moral and Spiritual Education' Resource, Spring, pp 11-15

Clark, V. & Halstead, M. (1994) 'Report on National Conference on Moral and Spiritual Education' Journal of Moral Education, 23, 1, pp 103-104

Clark, V. (1995) 'Childhood bereavement and spiritual growth: first steps in exploring some issues; SPES 3, pp 2-10

### **Conferences attended:**

Spirituality In Education (May 1993) Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, London

Supporting Children Through Loss In The Education System (June 1993) University of Derby

National Association Of Bereavement Services (July 1993) University of York

Sea Of Faith (July 1993) University of Leicester

National Conference On Moral And Spiritual Education (September 1993) University of Plymouth, Exmouth

Royal College Of Psychiatrists (February 1994) Newcastle

Spiritual Development in Education (March 1994) Quaker Universalist Group, Fircroft College, Birmingham

International Colloquium On Spiritual And Moral Development: From Theory To Practice (July 1994) Islamic Academy, Cambridge

Education, Spirituality And The Whole Child (July 1994) Roehampton Institute, London

Sea of Faith (July 1994) University of Leicester

Education, Spirituality And The Whole Child: Expressions of Spirituality (July 1995)  
Roehampton Institute, London

The Inspection of The Spiritual And Moral Development Of The Child (November 1994) University of Plymouth, Exmouth

Implications Of Religious Faith As A Human Creation: Sea of Faith (July 1995)  
University of Leicester

New Voices: Bereavement Research Forum (February 1996) Sir Michael Sobell House, Churchill Hospital, Oxford

British Association for Counselling: 2nd Annual Counselling Research Conference (March 1996) University of Birmingham

signed.....*V. Clark*.....

date.....*22/4/96*.....

## **PART ONE**

## PREFACE

When I went back to school after my father died I found it very upsetting that no one actually came out with it and asked how I was, neither teachers nor pupils. No one mentioned that I had been off school for a week. Some people clearly avoided me, and if that was not possible, evaded any form of conversation that might bring up the dreaded topic of death.  
(Abrams, 1992, p 94)

My interest in bereaved young people began while teaching in a secondary school in Leicestershire from 1986 to 1988 when three 15-16 year old pupils, whom I taught or had pastoral responsibility for, experienced the death of their mothers while studying for exams. I began to be aware of how the school handled these events and what difficulties arose for those pupils at that stage in their academic life and went on to research for an MA dissertation entitled 'Death education for adolescents: an education for life?' This PhD thesis, which attempts to interpret as moral or spiritual those responses to bereavement which are usually described as psychological or behavioural, is a further stage in my exploration of this area.

I find it timely that during the course of this research the impact of bereavement within the school population has been highlighted by the following media-reported deaths: four pupils from Southway Community College while canoeing in Lyme Bay (March 1993), eleven pupils and a teacher from Hagley High School in an accident on the M40 (November 1993), Nicola Conroy at Hall Garth School (March 1994), headteacher Philip Lawrence outside St George's Roman Catholic School (December 1995) and 16 pupils <sup>and a teacher</sup> at Dunblane Primary School (March 1996).

After the M40 accident, The Daily Mirror (19/11/93) led its front page account with the question "Why?" and I am aware that it is this kind of question - with its moral and spiritual overtones - that teachers often have to face when pupils in their class are bereaved. Although society may use explanations of cause and effect and blame and responsibility there is seldom any easy answer as to why people die,

especially when they are young. However well prepared we think we are, the unexpected and final nature of death always surprises us and questions about one's own significance, life's meaning and purpose and what, if anything, happens after death are seldom far from articulation.

## INTRODUCTION

Surprisingly little is written on the idea of development itself. Or perhaps it is not surprising that a notion so central to a whole era is simply taken for granted. It is an idea that shows up in almost every field of study today, one of those optimistic modern terms that nearly everyone wants a share of. (Moran, 1987, p 165)

Like Moran, I believe it is important to carefully examine the concept of development since, as it is basically a biological one frequently applied in a variety of non-biological settings, commonly held views are that development, like physical maturation, is 'natural' and 'normal' - although 'unnatural' and 'abnormal' forms are recognized to exist. Such an examination of the concept will enable me to explore what specific forms of development - such as 'moral' and 'spiritual' - might mean, particularly within education since educational ideas have been influenced by other fields with their own particular notions of natural and normal development.

In order to undertake the examination mentioned above I have divided this thesis into two parts. In Part One I conduct a philosophical analysis of the concept of human development, moral development, spiritual development and stages of development before considering ideas of moral and spiritual development within bereavement. In Part Two I explain my research approaches and present my findings in terms of concepts of and ideas about development explored earlier.

### ***Part One***

In chapter one I explore notions of development within religious, philosophical, scientific and psychological theories in order to note commonalities and differences, particularly between the two main psychological viewpoints, mechanism and organicism, regarding leading developmental characteristics: reductionism or anti reductionism, continuity or discontinuity, additive or multiplicative, and quantitative or qualitative. I show that psychological theories hold differing views as to whether the agent/organism is active, passive or conflicted in the developmental process, whether there is an end-state towards

which development moves and whether human development involves critical ages or psychosocial stages, and that issues of cause (nature-nurture) and direction (continuity-discontinuity) are frequently debated. However, I also suggest that views of development cannot ignore socio-cultural influences, particularly regarding notions of 'childhood' and children's legal rights, responsibilities and innocence which, in their turn, influence ideas of morality and spirituality.

I continue in chapter one by comparing such specialist views of development with everyday usage, noting that it is often a synonym for 'increase', 'expand', 'evolve', 'conversion' and 'effect', and that it is usually perceived to involve change and growth. Depending upon whether 'development' is viewed as an end-state or an ongoing process I suggest that it is often perceived - particularly within education - from one of three viewpoints:

- the part completed so far
- the part happening now
- the predictable future outcome

and that any of these views may involve making judgements regarding the 'present' ever-changing state, differences between present and previous states, and future situations.

After noting influential definitions from developmental psychology and educational philosophy which repeat some themes previously mentioned (maturation, growth, temporary process, end-state, change) as well as suggesting new ones ('trace effects' or impressions, self-stimulation, self-regulation), I experiment with a synthesized definition of development to see how far it covers both human and non-human forms. Next I trace Aristotelian 'causes' in five further definitions in order to arrive more closely at ideas of development pertinent to morality and spirituality:

- a series of changes but not necessarily an increase in size
- a principle of unity linking the identity of the thing in question through the whole process of development

- intentional intervention rather than inevitable maturation
- an end-state as the rationale for development and a measure of improvement
- generative change.

I contend throughout this thesis that the basic building blocks of our 'core self' are the body, mind and emotions and, accordingly, that physical, intellectual and emotional development are the only true forms of development. I argue that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development do not exist in their own right but depend upon the body, mind and emotions responding to social and cultural influences, including religious beliefs. Therefore, when I discuss moral development and spiritual development I do so with the idea that such developmental forms involve the body for expression, the mind for thinking and the emotions for feeling but that no tangible forms of development called moral or spiritual independently exist.

In chapters two and three I explore religious, philosophical and psychosocial theories of both moral and spiritual development in order to compare these two particular forms with human development itself - just as the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED, 1994a) tried to do:

In what ways, if any, does the term 'development' differ when used in conjunction with each of the four adjectives (spiritual, moral, social, cultural)? ('The concept of development', question 4)

I also discuss how far it is appropriate and possible for OFSTED to inspect such provision in schools.

In chapter two I discuss moral theories of duty, consequence and virtue before exploring Piaget's ideas and Kohlberg's theory of moral development. I note that Kohlberg focused on justice reasoning in contrast to Gilligan's concern for caring, and that Kohlberg finally changed stage 6 of his theory into a philosophical end-point and stage 7 into a metaphorical or hypothetical soft stage - which disappears from later versions (see Appendix 1). I discuss the role of schools (as

institutions), teachers (as individuals), family and other aspects of society in the development of morality and show that personal intention, educational intervention, end-state and process are particularly important issues when considering moral development.

In chapter three I show that a key concept in spiritual development has been that of dualism (spirit-mind, spirit-body, spiritual-material, spiritual-sexual) with associated notions of continuity-discontinuity within the spiritual life in terms of religious/secular lifestyles and, within religious institutions, the active/contemplative life. I also suggest that the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam offer a particular form of nurture designed to counteract the imperfect human nature that they perceive humanity possesses and that age-old beliefs of spirituality as the essence or motive of a person are recurring in recent psychological views.

In chapter four I consider the notion of stages of human development in more detail: ages, critical periods or eras, and psychosocial roles. I explore moral development regarding Piagetian notions of hierarchical stages, Kohlbergian hard and soft stages, the use of hypothetical or real-life dilemmas and the principles of caring and justice in plotting moral development. Finally, I use a view of Kohlberg's hypothetical soft stage 7 as a means of showing the inter-relatedness of all living things in both moral and spiritual terms, replacing traditional 'stages' of dualism or discontinuity in spiritual development with a metaphor of ripples of increased consciousness and awareness. Where appropriate throughout these four chapters, I relate my ideas to bereavement in children and young people in order to contextualize the analysis.

In chapter five I apply the notions of natural-unnatural and normal-abnormal, previously considered regarding development, to the process and experience of bereavement. I contend that both development and bereavement are natural, adaptive processes which humans generally respond to according to nomothetic

laws, although 'unnatural' or 'abnormal' development and grieving can occur according to idiographic laws which recognize individual differences. I relate four well-known grieving tasks to moral and spiritual themes arising from the model of Kohlberg's seven areas of inter-connectedness: self development, awareness and appreciation of other people, and enhanced existential awareness. I also suggest that developmental concepts of discontinuity-continuity are evident in all views of death.

## ***Part Two***

In chapter six I explain how I devised an ethics protocol, questionnaires and interview questions. I describe the first phase of my research (working in schools) and the second phase (working in other contexts), particularly interviews with four 16/17 year old girls bereaved of a parent and/or sibling whose stories form the heart of my data.

In chapter seven I present my findings in terms of aspects of development explored earlier:

- personal development over time (relationships with family, friends and other people, emotional development, changes in personality, behaviour, creativity, and cognitive development, particularly regarding views of life)
- interaction between bereavement and school events (significant life events and significant deaths, funeral attendance, exams, school work, teacher responses)
- moral and spiritual development (traditional religious beliefs and practices, belief in God or a divine power, having a sense of God or the deceased, moral and spiritual explanations and support, formulation of new beliefs, moral principles, socio-conventional laws and expressions of practical spirituality).

In chapter eight I review the limitations of my research, draw implications from my findings and suggest future areas for research. I relate my implications to

- the core self and stages of development (particularly cognitive development, emotional development and sex differences)
- theories of moral and spiritual development (traditional religion and views of God, moral laws and principles, and the impact of the research itself on these forms of development)
- bereaved pupils, schools and OFSTED (particularly pupil-teacher relationships and absence from school).

I consider that future research needs to balance the naturalness of death itself with the individual significance of each particular death for children and young people. I specifically note that it is always difficult to obtain typical findings from such a self-selected population; that males are under-represented in all the literature; that working in schools presents a dilemma in terms of a researcher-teacher-counsellor role and that researchers require appropriate training in bereavement issues. I suggest that future work needs to consider both pupils and staff regarding what schools have done, are doing and could do in order to better support all bereaved members of their population, that initial teacher training and INSET need improving in this area, and that it would be helpful to establish an educational centre for resources and information on loss, death and bereavement.

## **Definitions**

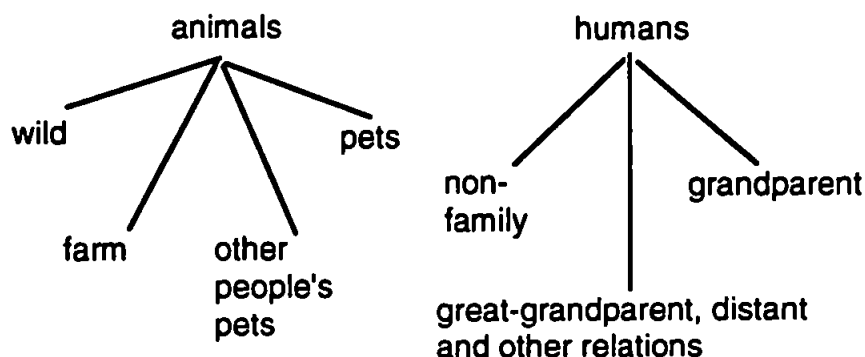
For the purpose of this study I have adopted a working definition of 'children' as attending primary school (5-11 years) and 'young people' as attending secondary school (11-16) or further education (16-18). Those over 18 years are termed 'adult.' I have not looked at the bereavement experiences of pre-school age children (birth-5 years) but only of those children and young people in compulsory schooling (5-16 years) and further education (16-18 years) since I am trying to explore the role of schools/colleges in the spiritual and moral development of their pupils.

Within western culture the causes of death are commonly defined as:

- natural and anticipated (gradual, usually in old age)
- natural and unanticipated (sudden, at any age)
- by accident (unexpected, sudden at any age)
- by suicide (unexpected, sudden at any age)
- by murder (unexpected, sudden at any age).

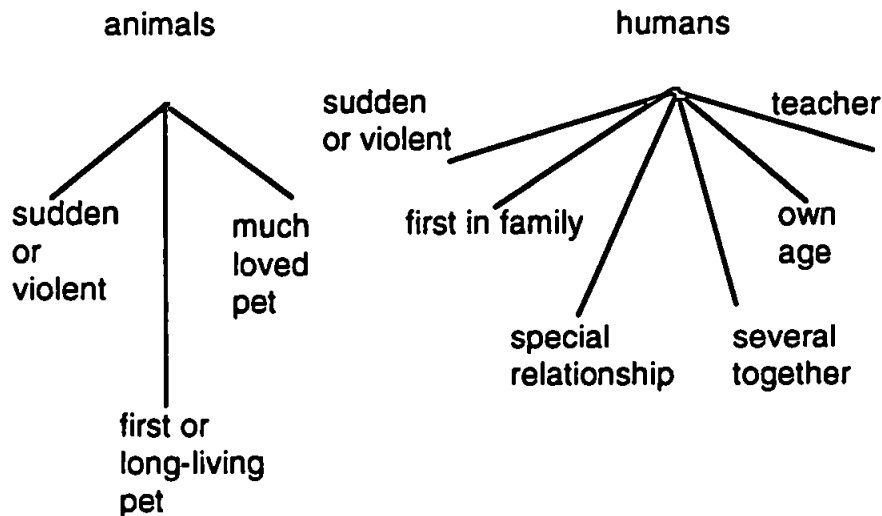
Bearing these definitions in mind, a taxonomy of the significance of specific deaths is proposed below in order to understand the possible responses by children and young people.

**Figure 1. 1** Deaths that are usually not significant



I suggest that the deaths of elderly people (eg: grandparents) are not so significant because they are usually anticipated and, unless special circumstances prevail (as suggested below), they seem timely and do not challenge the belief that older things die first. The death of distant family members and non-family members is usually less distressing because they are not so well known.

**Figure 1. 2 Deaths that may be significant depending on circumstances**



I suggest that sudden or violent death (perhaps by accident, murder or suicide) and the death of a peer are usually considered significant because of their untimeliness. People with whom one has a special relationship (whether family or not) are often greatly missed and a teacher's death may be particularly distressing because of the close or regular nature of the relationship. The first death in a family may be a shock and the clustering of several together is also likely to seem significant.

Deaths that are nearly always significant, whatever one's age, are those of parents and siblings, as this research will show.

### **A note on gender influences on literature of human development**

This study notes that the reality of the world in which we live is socially and culturally constructed and that male perspectives, through their greater access to education and public life, have long dominated such constructing. The influential literature on philosophy, education, child development and psychology is mainly written by males while the new and growing literature concerning death and bereavement contains an increasing number of women (eg: Kubler-Ross, 1969; Raphael, 1984; Sanders, 1989; Black, 1995) - perhaps because the private world

of caring for the dying and attending to the bereaved has traditionally been assigned to females. In bereavement counselling, women outnumber men as both counsellors and clients often because they seem more willing to talk about their own feelings and to listen to other people doing so (Bennett, 1995).

Although I consider it important to recognize the sources and potential biases of influential literature, this study may be able to do no more than draw attention to this imbalance as it explores the experiences of bereaved children and young people within the constructions of 'normal' and 'natural' of our present society.

## **CHAPTER ONE : HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

### **THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE**

... I do not believe that there ever will be or can be one sole and unitary way of understanding human nature, its variations, its settings, or its growth. No theory can ever be the true theory; it can only be more or less right in the light of certain criteria, and it is always crucial to be as explicit as possible about these criteria. (Bruner, 1990, p 344)

#### **Commonsense, religious, philosophical and scientific theories**

Theories of human development are not new. Everyday views about how human nature usually develops are implicit in common-sense thinking which is displayed in the social and cultural assumptions that people make about themselves, other people and the world in which they live and expressed in customs, codes of ethics, folklore and proverbs. Views about how human nature should develop are also implicit in philosophical and religious traditions, many of which are ancient in origin, and Christianity and Islam, for example, prescribe development of a particular aspect of human nature - morality - and the relationship between humanity and God. Most theories, including recently formulated psychological ones, tend to focus on individual development although the influence of society on the individual is recognized by social psychology.

In contrast to religious prescriptive theories, secular scientific theories tend to be both descriptive and explicit. For example, Piaget's theory of genetic epistemology is a general theory using integrated principles to explain several aspects of development such as physical, mental, moral and social. It has a narrow scope - childhood - and describes, rather than prescribes, how knowledge is acquired.

Religious theories of human development address the issue of death through theology and funeral customs. In these ways death is legitimated as an acceptable event within our social existence through explanations of its nature

and purpose and recognition of its irreversible and inevitable nature. Such theories allow people to grieve over the loss of those they love and to continue living, without fear of their own death, in a world that may be significantly changed. Ritual and ceremony are more explicitly used at such times in order to counter the lack of a solution to death and the potential breakdown of the everyday reality in which humans normally live. Religious theories vary in their explicit explanations of death's purpose and meaning and what happens afterwards although belief in some kind of continuity, expressed as resurrection, rebirth, reincarnation or transmigration is widespread, as are prescriptions regarding appropriate behaviour and treatment of bereaved family members.

However, Berger and Luckman (1967) suggest humans have a taken-for-granted belief about the way the world is and how people behave in it which is perpetuated through such things as language, symbols and institutions. Issues of social constructivism are also evident in personal construct therapy which holds that we construct meanings by differentiating patterns out of chaos and communicating the meanings we construct through language (Rowe, 1989), and in so-called radical theology, epitomized by Cupitt (1994, p 277):

The suggestion that the idea of God is man-made would only seem startling if we could point by contrast to something that has *not* been made by humans. But since our language shapes every topic raised in it, we cannot. In an innocuous sense, all our normative ideas have been posited by ourselves, including all the truths of logic and mathematics as well as all our ideals and values.

### **Models of psychological development**

According to Dixon (1990) five models of developmental psychology - mechanism, organicism, psychoanalysis, contextualism and dialecticism - have their origins in Darwinian thinking and these will be discussed below. The first three are well known in the fields of education, child-rearing and counselling and interest in a sixth, known as life-span development, has extended the scope of enquiry prompted by the increased number of people surviving into middle and old age

(Kastenbaum, 1990). It is interesting to recognize that developmental psychology has largely addressed three of the four 'causes' or explanations postulated by Aristotle for why and how things exist (material cause: the substance from which a thing is made; efficient cause: what brought the thing into being; and formal cause: the form or structure of the thing itself) and that explanations of the final cause (what its significance, meaning or purpose is) are mainly addressed by philosophy and religion.

The mechanistic model of human development, which is traditionally seen as the origin of the science of developmental psychology, includes behaviourism and social learning theories. Hall, an ardent evolutionist to whom the *U.S.C.* of the *concept* 'adolescent' can be traced (1904) was also a leading exponent of recapitulation theory.

Mechanism views the organism as a machine composed of discrete parts operating in time and space, a relatively passive participant in a more active environment. This model is in line with the unity-of-science position, which holds that a cause must always precede its effect and that the laws of the basic natural sciences, physics and chemistry, are the fundamental laws governing the natural world. An understanding of the mechanisms whereby atoms and molecules combine and function within these sciences is considered to lead to an understanding of the laws of everything else. Five characteristics of the unity-of-science viewpoint are that all phenomena, whether living or non living, conform to the same laws (reductionism), are constellations of greater or lesser biological and chemical complexity (continuity), are comprised of the basic building blocks of atoms and molecules, and are analogous to a machine (mechanism). Movement to a higher level consists of adding more molecular elements to a lower one (additive) while difference between levels is of amount, magnitude or size (quantitative) (Lerner, 1976).

By contrast, the organismic viewpoint, patterned after the biological view of growth and including growth and cognitive theories, sees development as qualitative, unidirectional, irreversible and displaying apparently universal stage patterns. It sees development as goal directed and, therefore, teleological. Organicism embraces the epigenetic viewpoint that new phenomena emerge at each new level of analysis which cannot be reduced to the laws of the lower level. It considers that it is impossible to reduce new qualitative change - which comprise change in type and kind - to a previous form since what has emerged was not present at the lower organizational level and could not have emerged until its present level. It holds, therefore, that because (a) the nature of what exists changes from level to level and (b) a qualitative change occurs from level to level, there cannot be continuity between the levels. It further asserts that the parts of the organism do not merely add up but multiply, producing a new complexity, so that the whole organism is more than the sum of just its parts. Characteristics of this viewpoint are the opposite of those of the unity-of-science position: anti-reductionism, discontinuity, interactionist, multiplicative and qualitative (Lerner, 1976).

An understanding that the integrity of the whole organism depends not only upon the regular division but also the programmed death of some of its cells - either because they have served their purpose or because over-production is an inevitable feature of the evolutionary process (Horizon, 1996) - enables elements of both these principal ways of viewing development to be 'right.' There is ongoing continuity of the whole at the expense of the systematic discontinuity of a few parts. Multiplication, addition and subtraction are all involved since, if they were not, growth would be mere increase in size without shape and detail caused by cell death.

Mechanism and organicism also parallel commonly held beliefs about what happens to us after we die. Some people reflect mechanistic thinking in their belief that our bodies are reduced to atoms and molecules which disperse through

earth, air, fire and water and feed other organisms. In parts of India the Zoroastrian (or Parsee) belief that contact with human death will defile the four elements means that a corpse cannot be buried, cremated or immersed in water. The other view, particularly held by those brought up within Judaeo-Christian and Islamic cultures, and in line with organismic developmental theory, is that qualitative discontinuous change occurs whereby another invisible part of us, termed our spirit or soul, 'lives on' in another place or dimension, although our body is buried or burnt.

Psychoanalytic theory, which focuses on personality development particularly of a pathological kind, views development as qualitative. It proceeds towards an end-state by moving adequately through critical life stages created by conflict between internal drives and the external mores of society, although regression to or fixation upon an earlier stage may occur if such movement is not achieved. Contextualism, which includes role theory, focuses on the interaction between the individual and the social and cultural context. It sees development as continuous, although composed of quantitative differences, with the human being actively involved in the process of adaptation to a changing environment. The theory of dialecticism in human development arose from the nineteenth century model of dialectical materialism in society. It focuses on the interaction between changing individuals and their changing environment, and views human development, both individually and collectively, as a continuous process of thesis (continuity), antithesis (discontinuity) and synthesis in response to contradiction and conflict. Soviet theories of development embrace dialecticism and aspects of contextualism and like psychoanalysis, consider that critical periods arise in childhood as well as across the entire span of human development. Furthermore, they suggest that there is a correlation between the ontogenetic development of intellectual processes and historical development (Davidov, 1990). This last insight is significant because, although theorizing about human development has always occurred, it should be recognized that many widely accepted theories

including those of morality and spirituality, were formulated at a particular point in an individual's life or in a country's or society's history.

### **Debates regarding nature-nurture and continuity-discontinuity in human development**

Two particular debates, evident in many theories about development, concern questions of cause and direction. They are respectively: (a) whether genetic inheritance (nature) or environmental stimulation (nurture) is most significant in development and (b) whether development itself is continuous or discontinuous (Lerner, 1976). While mechanistic theorists typically explain development in terms of a single set of factors - either nature or nurture - some organismic theorists maintain that development is predetermined through inheritance. Others, such as Schneirla, however, hold a 'probabilistic' epigenetic viewpoint that experience and maturation are both involved but, since the timing of these interactions cannot always be the same for all members of a species, it is only possible to say that certain changes will probably occur "given fairly typical timing of maturation-experience interactions" (Lerner, 1976, p 36).

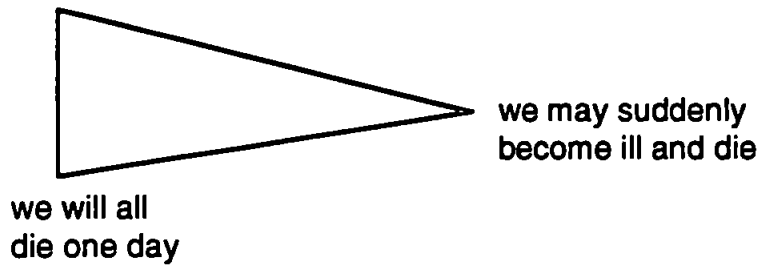
#### ***Cause of development: nature or nurture***

The first debate, which has its origins within philosophical and religious traditions, considers whether development is caused by preceding effects or is goal directed, and what part human will and supernatural powers play in this. Except in mechanistic theories, human will is generally considered to be active in making choices - thereby enabling humans to have some measure of control over their destinies - while supernatural intervention is considered to occur either independently or through human solicitations of offering, prayer or ritual (Thomas, 1990a).

The genetic 'norm of reaction' concept appears to resolve this controversy by proposing that heredity not only offers a range of potential but also sets the

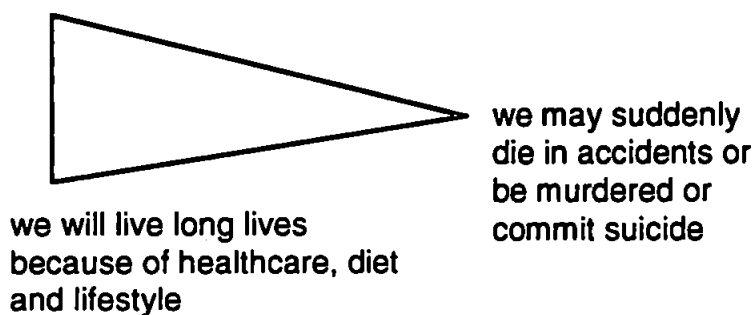
limits for the development of characteristics which the environment determines by interacting within these set limits (Lerner, 1976). The idea of two continuums - one of indirectness regarding hereditary factors and the other of breadth regarding environmental factors - expressing how the influences of *both* heredity, and environment are dispersed among individuals (Anastasi, 1958) can also be used to describe contemporary attitudes to death.

**Figure 1. 3 Nature continuum regarding attitudes to death**



At one end of the nature continuum is the broad perspective that it is our pre-determined end eventually to die, while at the narrow end is the recognition that genetic impairment may hasten the event before it is expected.

**Figure 1. 4 Nurture continuum regarding attitudes to death**



At one end of the nurture continuum is the broad perspective that death is continually postponed through improved medical care, diet or lifestyle while at the narrow end is the recognition that improved technology can go out of control or humans themselves may cause their own or another's death.

### ***Direction of development: continuity and discontinuity***

The second debate deals with the direction of development, or from what earlier to what later conditions it passes. While theorists of physical development have suggested that growth moves in two major directions (from the centre of the body towards the extremities and from the head towards the tail), others have talked in terms of stages of development from conception, through the cell dying process involving maturation, to final death. Non-physical views of development, by comparison, maintain that a prime feature is increasing differentiation (Thomas, 1990a). The continuity-discontinuity debate often asks whether the laws governing development stay the same or change, either within the life span of an individual of a species (ontogenesis), or throughout the species (phylogenesis).

### **Models of sociological and cultural development**

The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgement and action, organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against a social and natural background is ... a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures. (Geertz, 1979, p 229)

Through its talk of 'the child', 'the mother' or 'the mother-infant relationship', psychology has for long described all children, mothers and mother-child relationships as if they are the same with the result that cultural values have been presented as if they are facts of nature. By focusing on 'individual development,' psychology also tends to emphasize the properties of the individual as the only significant variables - thereby implying that culture stays constant. Such individual descriptions appear to deny that important social and political tensions often exist between children, their parents and the state and that schools, as institutionalized agents of the state, often play a part in this. Furthermore, because of the suppression of psychoanalytic contributions in early work, much developmental psychology concentrates on cognitive development abstracted from affect or motivation (Ingleby, 1986).

Social constructionism recognizes that the world into which we are born is structured to maintain social order among men and women, children and adults. Such order depends upon rules and conventions acquired through public and private, individual and collective interactions and experiences rather than through private individual cognition alone (Harré, 1986a). Since children play a limited part in the world's production and cannot choose what to respond to or whom to choose as their socializing agents, they tend to accept as absolute how things are done. For example, children cannot appreciate the complex origins of their parents' response to the death of a family member formulated over the years in response to other losses and they are likely to use their parents as role models until they perceive that other people respond differently. Then they may use more specific forms of 'generalized others' (Mead, 1934) from school, the media or the local community to broaden their thinking and behaviour.

### **The social construction of childhood**

During the course of human history, the timing and significance of physiological maturity as an indication of the level of human development has changed. When infant mortality was higher than it is now and before the advent of near-universal education (at least in the developed world), 'childhood' was shorter and puberty usually marked entry into the adult world of employment, marriage and parenthood.

In developed countries nowadays, puberty occurs during the period a young person spends at school - and, in addition to this physiological form of individual maturation, psychosocial forms exist which mark gradual entry at different ages into adult life. Such forms include being legally old enough to vote, have sexual intercourse, marry, drive most vehicles, or buy cigarettes and alcohol (see also chapter 4). Improved medical care for all in developed industrialized countries also means that children's exposure to death is increasingly seen as untimely,

inappropriate or distressing because of the implicit insistence that they are innocent and in need of protection from such harsh realities.

However, in socioeconomic 'backward' or Third World countries the end of psychosocial development may be forced on children well before the time of puberty. The discrepancy between British and other norms of childhood is exposed when western media depicts the exposure of such children to sudden and often violent death from civil war, famine, earthquake or other disasters (see also chapter 7).

### **Children and young people: time, innocence and responsibility**

It has been observed that primary school teachers often consider young children to be in a natural amoral state in which they are not fully responsible for their actions (King, 1978) and parallels between such a timeless, innocent state and spiritual experiences have been frequently made (see also chapter 3). Robinson (1977, p 16) asserts that " 'the original vision' of childhood is no mere imaginative fantasy but a form of knowledge" or type of mystical experience which is self-authenticating. Such a view is adumbrated by Lewis (1940) who, in descriptions reminiscent of recapitulation theory, suggests that the experience of 'Paradisaal man' - the creature who was "all consciousness" (p 65) and totally reposed in his Creator before The Fall - is to be found in children because:

... from our own childhood we remember that before our elders thought us capable of 'understanding' anything, we already had spiritual experiences as pure and momentous as any we have undergone since... (p 67)

However, the paradox of childhood is that, in social terms, it is seen as an important preparation for the future life of the nation while, in individual psychological terms, it is considered a dangerous time because any traumas suffered might encourage adult neuroses. These two attitudes produce the apparent contradiction that children and young people (aged 5 to 16 or 18) are deemed to be (i) preparing themselves for the world of work by studying for and

passing national exams and (ii) minors in most legal respects. Although preparing "for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life" (Education Reform Act (ERA) 2 b), pupils are frequently assumed to be unaware of or unexposed to the pain and grief of life and death.

As Bruner (1990) states *above*, description of human development depends on how theorists regard human nature. No developmental theory can be neutral in describing what it sees because it directs its attention to what the theory believes is there to be seen. British educational theory and practice, for example, have been influenced at different times by the ideas of Christianity, (which tends to see humans as inclined towards immoral behaviour and requiring to be directed towards God), psychoanalysis (which focuses on the power of unconscious, hidden motives to affect behaviour and belief) and humanistic theory (which believes in the human capacity to bring forth or actualize potentialities). It is important to bear these influences in mind when comparing what has been written about spiritual and moral development from educational and religious perspectives and about bereavement in children and young people from medical, psychoanalytic and educational perspectives.

## **THEMES IN THEORIES AND BELIEFS ABOUT HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

### **Contributions from everyday language: common sense thinking**

Although the word 'development' is usually used in a positive sense in an educational context - comparable to growth, opening, increase, progress, advance - it is not certain whether 'development' is always so perceived. Its use to delineate one section of the world (the 'First') from another, 'Third' part of itself implies that the former possess a better - and hence, preferable - standard of living than the latter and that these standards are universally prized and emulated. Even within our own 'developed' society, however, there is often outcry when 'development' is planned in green belts, areas of outstanding natural beauty and

historical interest or when further road 'development' such as bypasses and motorways infringe upon notions of conservation. This seems to indicate that some people consider there are limits to certain kinds of 'development' and that certain forms of it are unacceptable. Similarly, the development in an individual of so-called criminal tendencies, drug or alcohol habits, or certain personality or behavioural characteristics are deemed by many people to be 'development' of the wrong kind.

Everyday synonyms for the verb 'to develop' are: increase, expand and evolve, and for the noun 'development' words such as conversion and effect are often used. This highlights two common assumptions: (1) that development is to do with growth (increase, expand, evolve) and (2) that some kind of change is involved (conversion and effect). Furthermore, broad overviews describing development in and of other things as well as nature and humanity - such as historical events, maths, music and land - suggest that development is both an ongoing and a completed activity. The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary (1993) lists uses of the word as:

- an action or process of developing; evolution; growth; maturation; a gradual unfolding; a fuller working out
- a developed form or product; a result of developing; a change in a course of action or events or in conditions; a stage of advancement
- the state of being developed; a developed condition; a full-grown state.

'Development' and 'evolution' both contain similar notions of unrolling, laying open by degrees, and unfolding. There is a sense of something which is already present being exposed, of becoming bigger, or clear enough to be seen, and even of something long (like a carpet) being gradually undone in order to expose and/or use the surface inside. Although the act of unfolding and unrolling implies forward progress - bringing out from within that which was previously small, unshaped or unclear but now is bigger, shaped and clear - it is necessary to consider whether sideways or backwards movement are also possible.

If 'to develop' means 'to unfold', the inference is of 'opening out' rather than of 'closing up', even if that 'opening' temporarily returns to a 'closed' state as part of its cycle (as flowers do at the end of the day). Development - at least in human physical form - may be understood as something which, when once begun, cannot be stopped. It may mark time or take a detour but it is relentless in its ageing progress. Whether this picture of 'development' remains the same when it is qualified by the adjectives 'spiritual' and 'moral' will be discussed later.

### **Development: completed so far, happening now or in the future?**

We have constructed the concept of time to include 'the present' but it can be argued that there is no such thing, and that only past and future exist since 'the present' is only the most recently remembered 'past' and is so brief it can hardly be apprehended. However, the concept of 'ongoing' development includes ideas of an act of doing something in the period we describe as 'the present'; the notion of process; a state; and gradual growth. Ideas of 'completed' development include an act which has been done; a state of having been developed; and, in the evolutionary sense, a gradual, imperceptible working towards a distant end-state. Even though the act of development may (as far as we know) be eternal or continuous, the finitude of our lives forces us to describe and focus on either:

- the part completed so far, or
- the part we can see happening before our eyes, or
- the predictable future outcome.

Thus, this movement or progress, which we call development, may be measured by how long, how far, or how much can be measured between two fixed points - such as last year and this year, today and tomorrow, and before and after a specific event. Furthermore, such measuring activities may consist of examining time, quantity, quality, distance, and size, and even of comparing things of the same size, circumstances and age.

The part completed so far (for example from birth to now) considers: an act of development (in the sense of something having been done) which is apparent in the completed state so far - that is to say, the state of having been developed that now exists, even though this development is in a state of flux because 'now' is never static.

The part we can see happening before our eyes considers: a process, a continuous state, a gradual unfolding and an act (in the sense of something being done now). Only the slowly changing state is evident, but what it means or implies cannot be decided until comparisons have been made with what existed before - even if only a few minutes ago.

The part we can predict or expect to occur in future anticipates either maintenance of or change in the speed or standard already observed, in either the part completed so far or the part happening now.

It is easy to recognize that death finally arrests all living organisms but not so easy to see that programmed cell death is an ongoing necessity of such life, nor yet to identify initial, subsequent and complete - or most mature - stages of an organism's life. Normally, final, or most mature stages of human development do not occur just before death in old age although, by that stage of life, 'development' tends to mean any change that occurs rather than the more predictable move towards greater complexity and cognition that earlier development entails. How these everyday views about development compare with the more specialized opinions of contemporary developmental psychologists and philosophers will be considered next.

## **Contributions from psychology and philosophy: cause and direction in development**

Schneirla (1957), a developmental psychologist, suggests that two concepts, maturation and experience, represent the complex factors of development and that maturation, in its turn, connotes both growth and differentiation. Growth refers to changes in an organism through tissue accretion or enlargement and differentiation refers to changes in the interrelations of tissues, organs or other parts with age (Lerner, 1976). This description of development as growth conforms, as I have shown, with popular understanding. Experience, according to Schneirla, refers to all stimulus influences that act on the organism throughout the course of its life until death leaving 'trace effects' of which early experiences, although more diffuse and general than those that occur later in life, "may be fundamental to behavioural development" (p 103). The death of a significant person during a person's childhood may be considered to leave the 'trace effects' that Schneirla mentions. According to Schneirla, these two concepts, maturation and experience - which respectively represent both nature and nurture - are closely integrated at all stages of development.

He also proposes that the organism itself, by performing certain behaviour to which a response is given and to which response it further responds, plays a significant role in its own development which he terms circular functions and self-stimulation. This idea has been further developed in ipsative theory which takes account of the role that the individual's attributes play in her or his own development both within and across time (Gardue et al, 1990).

Werner (1957) focuses on the continuity-discontinuity issue and posits that developmental psychology's one regulating principle is the orthogenetic one which states that:

wherever development occurs it proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increased differentiation, articulation, and hierarchical integration (p 126).

This principle leads to an understanding of how discontinuity and continuity are synthesized in development: discontinuity occurs as the earlier global organization becomes differentiated, and continuity occurs as the later differentiated organization becomes hierarchically organized. However, since the concept of 'development' is "fundamentally biological" (Harris, 1957, p 3), this principle could suggest that those features of it that change, grow or die either by design, with age or according to seasons may be readily learnt by observation while more abstract and sophisticated concepts such as 'spiritual' and 'moral' development are difficult to observe and must be learnt or understood by different methods.

Werner also clarifies the difference between quantitative and qualitative change with regard to continuity-discontinuity, explaining that the former refers to changes in amount, magnitude and frequency while the latter refers to emergent changes (what it is that exists) and whether or not a new quality has come into being to characterize the organism. Thus, qualitative changes are, by their very nature, always examples of discontinuity, characterized by 'emergence' (inability to be reduced from a later to an earlier stage) and 'gappiness' (lack of an intermediate level between earlier and later forms). Quantitative discontinuity, according to Werner, can be sufficiently defined by the second characteristic of 'gappiness' or abruptness alone. Here, again, a common understanding of the term development - this time as change - is used.

Nagel (1957), an educational philosopher, states that the term 'development' can signify both a temporal process as well as its end-product which, as I have already shown, is a popular definition. He says that in current usage the term carries the suggestion that developmental processes make progressively manifest something hidden or latent - such as in the development of a photographic plate where a sequence of continuous changes brings about an outcome which was potentially present in an earlier stage of the process. The term, Nagel suggests, also has a teleological flavour (without assuming either the operation of purposes

or final causes) by its imputation that the sequence of change described as development "contributes to the generation of some more or less specifically characterized system of things ..." (p 16).

A further notion of development is its application to repetitive change which induces wear and, perhaps, stoppage (eg: wearing away of cogs in a clock) but Nagel stresses that if this use of the term 'development' is to be correct, it must refer to changes that are cumulative and irreversible. Moreover, he states that the term refers to changes eventuating in modes of organization not previously evident in the organism "such that the system acquires an increased capacity for self-regulation ... [and] ... independence from environmental fluctuations" (p 16). Thus, Nagel concludes, the concept of development involves two essential components:

the notion of a system possessing a definite structure and a definite set of pre-existing capacities; and the notion of a sequential set of changes in the system, yielding relatively permanent but novel increments not only in its structure but in its modes of operation as well (p 17).

### **Overview of development from philosophy and psychology**

The following description is synthesized from the different philosophical and psychological standpoints previously mentioned. I want to discuss how far it provides an accurate account of development per se, in both human and non-human terms and in non-physical forms in humans.

Development is both a *temporary process* and an *end product* which is *cumulative, irreversible, self-regulating* and *independent*. It brings into being hidden or *latent capacities* and contributes to the generation of *specifically characterized things*. It has a *definite structure* which proceeds from non-differentiation and globality to differentiation and hierarchy, and it possesses *pre-existing capacities*. It *changes sequentially* to produce increments in both *structure* and *function*, while making both *qualitative* and *quantitative changes* in

terms of emergent features and increases in amount, size, magnitude and frequency. Development is a complex interaction between (a) the physical growth and differentiation of the organism itself as it undergoes *maturation*, (b) the physical, intellectual and emotional stimulation it gives to and receives from *itself* and its *environment* and (c) the life-long influences of all external physical, intellectual, emotional, social and cultural *experiences*.

This apparently comprehensive description has a potential flaw if applied uncritically to human development because it contains ideas which apply to human development but not to the development of a photograph or an oak tree, and vice versa. For example, because the *process* of development of a photograph passes very quickly through to its end-state, more attention is paid to the product (the end-state) than to the stages of the process and it may be difficult to believe that the development of a photograph is a *temporary* process. People, on the other hand, pass slowly through each *temporary* process of development and their end-state is much harder to identify. Furthermore, a person may through practice, develop skills in piano playing or sport but, by negligence, fail to keep up that standard and thus halt such process, but an oak tree cannot, except through disease or death, lose its ability to produce leaves and fruit.

Peters (1972b) makes this unwitting shift from non-human to human examples in order to examine the links between mental development and the "more specialized forms of development" (p 501) in subject areas such as mathematics and says he is adopting Nagel's

much tighter criteria for the use of 'development' which are taken from a range of cases in which what is potential becomes actual (p 502).

He dismisses the first criterion (pre-existing structure), stating that "few would now support this inner ripening or unfolding type of theory" (p 503) since it applies mainly to biology and botany, and adds that the third criterion (an end-state) is problematic because, in contrast to the maturity of an oak tree, "it would be rash

to say that within any [person] ... a final stage had been reached" (p 510). Thus Peters dismisses two criteria which Nagel had not applied to humanity alone. He concludes that only the second criterion (sequential changes of an irreversible sort) "seems much more central to the concept of 'development' " (p 503), particularly in respect of Kohlberg's cognitive theory of moral development - apparently unaware that Nagel's example for this criterion had been a clock.

### **Contributions from educational philosophy: reflections of Aristotle's four causes**

In what follows I want to take the discussion of non-biological human development further by analysing descriptions of development in general use (Wright, 1986) in the light of earlier debates (Elliott, 1975; Hamlyn, 1975). I hope that this approach, together with my earlier description, will begin to clarify features of human development in the context of education as well as intimate what moral and spiritual development might mean in that setting.

In general discourse 'development' refers to, or is used as, one of the following.

- A series of changes, such as the stages of a journey.
- An increase of some kind, such as developing housing estates.
- As a transitive verb in order to say that "she developed in her children a love of the countryside" or "the photographs are being developed."
- A series of stages leading to an end-state, which are assessed as developmental by the extent to which they come up to the end-state or fulfil the criteria it demands, such as the realization of a plan.
- A synonym for changes for the better where, because the end-state is valued, the movement towards it is also valued to the extent to which it comes up to it. Thus, telling someone she is developing as a teacher is to congratulate her.
- A series of generative changes which are dependent on human intention to enable the development to take place, such as the development of electronic technology.

- A series of generative changes dependent on a pre-determined causal process and not on human intention, such as the development of the fruit fly (Wright, 1986).

In the first two examples development refers to a *series of changes* and shows that a *principle of unity* is needed in order to define the thing that is being developed. This description is reminiscent of Aristotle's material cause dealing with the substance from which a thing is made. The third example suggests that *development is by someone* and is not simply development per se, and I find Aristotle's efficient cause (what brought the thing into being) evident here, which may imply a belief in God or first cause. The fourth and fifth examples depend on the notion of an *end-state* and are often considered to be the only legitimate uses of the word outside of a biological context. Such a description, which suggests a final cause with its implication of purpose and meaning, is the traditional area of religion and philosophy. The last two examples include notions of the *generative nature* of development and seem to come closest to a central and universal meaning of development (Wright, 1986). This broad description of development involving both human intention and maturation implies Aristotle's formal cause, dealing with the form or structure of the thing itself.

### ***A series of changes***

This is a common view of development, implying both increase and growth, but Hamlyn (1975, p 27) asserts that development cannot be simply equated with growth since the mere growth of an organ - as in the case of the growth of a cancer - may be the result of malfunctioning so that talk of 'development' (which implies normal and healthy development) would be out of place because cancer has its own development plan which conflicts with this idea. He suggests that development "is at the least a species of growth but not growth itself" since mere increase in size is not part of a pattern which can be seen in functional or organizational terms.

Thus, as Schneirla has already shown, to equate 'development' merely with 'getting bigger' shows a lack of understanding of the principle of function, organization and synchronized change which development must entail. Development has not occurred unless increased size also includes fulfilment of a useful function, increased complexity and subtlety of differentiation. In line with this view, it also seems inappropriate to equate moral and spiritual development with change, growth, increased physical size or age.

### ***The principle of unity***

Hamlyn (1975, pp 29-30) says that there ought to be "some principle of identity to the series of events or states," and notes that

in most ordinary cases there will be a single thing that develops and there will be a similar progression in a given direction.

In response to this, Elliott (1975) feels that any suggestion that it is usually a single thing which develops is misleading as, in the case of an embryo, what we call 'development' is actually "development of an initial multiplicity of *separate objects* into a unity and then the further development of *this object* " (p 43, my italics). This distinction is actually the essence of Werner's definition of quantitative and qualitative change.

Wright's (1986) examples of journeys and housing estates represent both quantitative and qualitative change and continuity and discontinuity. The components of a train journey (eg: a person *boarding*, stowing luggage, finding a seat) represent quantitative discontinuity - abruptness - a series of unconnected events unified only by the agent experiencing them. However, development of a housing estate (watching the ground being levelled, travelling along a new road) represent both quantitative and qualitative change - 'gappiness' and emergence - since the end product (housing estate) is far more than the sum of its houses, roads, bus routes and shops.

It is therefore necessary to have an awareness of the identity of the thing that has developed, is developing or will develop, especially when there is a multiplicity of substances or component parts and/or an apparent discontinuity between development of these substances and parts. Thus, I suggest later in this chapter that moral and spiritual development are dependent upon physical, cognitive and emotional development and, while not developing at the same rate or in the same way, are integrally related to these other developmental forms.

***Development by someone and not simply development per se***

This description raises the distinction between:

- (i) the intentional development of an object or item by someone (eg: of a photograph);
- (ii) the intentional development of a person in some respect (eg: through education);
- (iii) the development of something unaffected by human intervention or intention (eg: a tree);
- (iv) the development of a person, according to maturation, without human intention.

Hamlyn (1975) raises the distinction between the first and last forms and says that comparing human development with the development of a photograph is unsatisfactory since what is in question in Nagel's (1957) examples "is the development of something by someone and not the development of something per se " and that the latter example is, in his opinion, what constitutes human development for, he tersely asserts: "Industry does not, I hope, just develop ... but *organisms may do so*" (p 33, my italics). This point reflects the ongoing debate as to whether development is natural (maturational) or nurtured by the environment and points, yet again, to the dilemma of using non-human examples as paradigms for human development. In fact, Nagel's analogy of developing a photograph also implies a developer - someone who knows how to bring the photograph into being

and acts upon it in order to do so - an idea strongly reminiscent of Aristotle's 'efficient cause.'

There is, then, a further distinction to be made between:

- (a) the intentional action of a human upon something else in order to develop it, whether it is human (see (ii) above) or non-human (see (i) above);
- (b) the apparently natural maturational process of development that the growth of an embryo into a baby and an acorn into an oak tree suggest;
- and (c) the development of human characteristics, qualities and powers.

Too rigidly equating one kind of development with another may not be helpful, particularly in education, as children are social beings who interact with other people besides their teachers, take an active part in their development and choose or resist ideas presented to them - unlike plants or photographs which cannot do this (Darling, 1982) .

Whether development is caused by someone or something, or is intentional or maturational, is an ancient question concerning efficient causes. Although it is apparent that a human being almost always grows from a baby into an adult, it may be fallacious to assume that all other forms of human development - usually described as intellectual, emotional, spiritual, moral, cultural and social - *are* likewise inevitable because notions of 'inevitability,' particularly of moral and spiritual development, are further affected by our interpretations of intentional human intervention or the role of supernatural powers.

### ***An end-state***

End-states, which are important in psychoanalytic theory, can be realizations of plans or the fulfilment of specific criteria (Wright, 1986) but Elliott (1975, p 41) comments that the realization of a plan seems to be development

in the primitive sense of a gradual unfolding which is the becoming manifest of something already existing in some manner but as yet unrevealed or not fully revealed.

We tend to view the events of history or our lives as unfolding before us in this way and the temporal structure of everyday life forces us to construct a perspective that takes account of the clock we daily live by and the calendar of time that has passed and is yet to come. Such thinking is in line with Aristotle's premise that all the objects in our existence consist of matter moving or changing in a purposeful pattern towards the achievement of some goal, usually the survival and reproduction of themselves. Nagel (1957, p 16) defers to this teleological suggestion when acknowledging that development often refers to "an explicitly or tacitly assumed consequence," and Hamlyn (1975, p 32) also claims that we must be able to see an essential connection between the state of a thing and its end-state "which, in some way is the rationale of the thing itself."

Wright (1986) however, considers that in non-biological development the rationale is in the *process* which is provided by the purpose of the action working in accordance with the principles that govern it and the methods it employs. Such rationales are often fulfilled when an unpredictable outcome emerges (eg: certain Olympic gymnastic standards are reached) or when we recognize that something has imperceptibly changed (eg: a few shops have now become the heart of a town). Elliott (1975, p 42) also comments that we deem it 'development' if the process is "sufficiently complex ... and chancy and difficult" and the product is "sufficiently substantial or striking". It is for these reasons that Wright considers that a belief in the end-state as a criterion for assessment of development is mistaken

because the subject of development *develops through all the different stages of development* including the last one, but this does not mean that it cannot be seen until the end (p 41, my italics).

However, talk about development often involves tacit moral judgements because to say, for example, that children are intellectually, emotionally or morally undeveloped or immature is not to make a "straightforward factual statement" but to indicate a lack of conformity with socially accepted standards (Hamlyn, 1975, p 36), and Wright (1986) also indicates this moral attitude in suggesting that

development is often used as a synonym for changes for the better. Perhaps this attitude indicates a subliminal correlation between the beliefs of 'growth' theorists that perfect manhood (sic) is present in the new-born child (Dearden, 1972) and an expectation that such innate perfection will come to fruition with no anticipated discrepancy between 'self-concept' and 'ideal self' (see later in this chapter). Certainly the justification of education in terms of self-realization or self-actualization, as Wright (1986, p 49) points out, assumes certain values (the importance of a balanced all-round self or an autonomous, evaluative self or a higher self with particular talents and intellectual or moral qualities) which, unlike the development of a biological organism, is always development of "an ideal self".

There may, therefore, be a danger of failing to make clear what kind of development is being discussed. Acceptance of the once popular notion of education nurturing the all-round development of the individual - in physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual terms - with its focus on development itself as a natural process, tends to overlook the need to justify development of these values in the directions specified (Wright, 1986). Thus, an explication of the purpose and meaning of the so-called 'final cause' or end-state is needed.

### ***Generative change***

The scope of generative change spans both natural and non-natural development (Wright, 1986) and this view seems to accord with Werner's (1957) clarification of how both continuity and discontinuity are synthesized in development. Undifferentiation leads to differentiation, and globality to hierarchy, while quantitative change characterizes amount and frequency, and qualitative change characterizes novelty, and emergence. Both quantitative and qualitative changes are being generated during the development of any organism and, in its turn, this organism ultimately becomes differentiated.

Elliott (1975), though, discounts this proposition when responding to Hamlyn's (1975) suggestion that it is necessary for each stage to grow out of the earlier one, by retorting that the development of the genital organs of an embryo are not necessary for the development of the legs. He does not recognize that, although legs clearly do not grow from genitals, each one of these organs grows in close proximity to the others so that although the development of each one constitutes specific discontinuity, it leads to continuity in the general area in which they are all situated. Programmed cell death of excess cells (discontinuity) triggers growth (continuity) elsewhere and, ultimately, on a wider scale overall.

This debate highlights yet again the significant differences between development dependent on human intention and development dependent on a pre-determined causal or maturational process which must be understood if, as Wright suggests, both are to be taken as "a central and universal meaning of development" (p 40) .

Elliott (1975) states that where there is human intention it is only the concept of development in biological, maturational terms that is challenged and that there is no reason for supposing that biological development is the only central case of development. In support of the case for non-biological development, Wright (pp 44-45) suggests that:

Development which is the result of human intention is only possible because the nature of its subject allows the possibility of its own development. ... For example ... human intention did not specify what science was or is to become, because these lie in the nature of science itself.

This idea links with the notion of potentiality which Hamlyn (1975) says must be taken seriously, whether the instance is of a plant's growth or the sculpting of a statue from marble, since the principles for development are already present in the thing itself. Elliott (1975) considers that potentiality is different from possibility, the former being connected to the nature of the thing in question, the latter being neither vital nor inevitable. He declares that "a potentiality is a possibility which, granted normal and suitable conditions, is actualized" (p 46) and that "since a

potentiality is definable solely in terms of that to which it is a potentiality" (p 47) it is associated almost exclusively with the end-state.

A similar dilemma regarding end-state may also arise, however, should it be argued that the potentiality for 'spiritual' and 'moral' development within education is "a possibility which, granted normal and suitable conditions, is actualized" (Elliott, 1975, p 46). Since education does not have a monopoly on concepts of morality and spirituality, it needs to be explained what 'normal' and 'suitable' conditions are. Their form and significance at home or in the local community (eg: at a place of worship) may differ so greatly from those found in school that the 'normality' and 'suitability' of one context may challenge that of the other.

It may be indisputable that the generative nature of development - whether from human intention or pre-determined causal processes - requires both 'normal' and 'suitable' conditions to support it. In human development, however, the essential nature of these conditions - for example their form and structure - will vary from person to person, depending upon level of maturation, experiences and 'trace effects', quality and quantity of self-stimulation (Schneirla, 1957) and social and cultural norms (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). For example, 'normal' and 'suitable' conditions for the moral or spiritual development of a child recently bereaved of a parent are likely to be different from 'normal' and 'suitable' conditions for a child not bereaved in this way. Furthermore, classroom discussions of how trees and plants 'die' in autumn or how differently Christians and Hindus think of God may have very different resonances for two bereaved children of the same age, sex and intellectual ability since their understanding of biological explanations and theological beliefs will depend upon, and may even affect, their physical maturation and emotional states.

Recognition that development of humans and fruit-flies involves over-production of cells that die and are absorbed by others begs the question whether moral and spiritual qualities in humans can be similarly over-produced in order to be refined

or assimilated. Physical development proceeds in this way because the bootstrapping process of evolution has no overall end-stage plan. Can moral and spiritual qualities, likewise, arise in response to short-term situations or be discarded as new situations arise?

### **Human development and education**

The changing shape of society has shifted to schools or other agencies many of the responsibilities which family members previously met. For example, rural families dependent on agriculture or fishing once provided health care, protection from attack, help in disaster, support in emotional distress, religious and spiritual guidance, educational and vocational training, employment, financial backing and even selection of a marriage partner in addition to love, companionship and entertainment (Thomas, 1990c). Nowadays urban families, as well as many rural ones, look outside themselves for this kind of support and, with increasing specialization in society, it may be said that the role of family members has been weakened. The funeral industry has taken away from bereaved people many of the tasks that often assist grieving, and schools and the media rather than the family, are increasingly expected to provide guidance on moral and spiritual issues.

The imbalance in the literature on the scope of human development - focusing largely on infants and children and less on young adults, older adults and the elderly - tends to highlight the view that the early years are most significant for development, whether from genetic or environmental influences. Such theories are often concerned with the role of education, which, as I have suggested, is an intentional intervention in human (particularly cognitive) development, or a form of "cultural nurturance" (Gardner, 1991, p 115). However, the apparently harmonious relationship between development and education - with varying emphasis placed on either one or the other - may be inaccurate because of lack of harmony between the three ways of representing knowledge which children

and young people encounter: universal accomplishments, non-universal scholastic knowledge and culturally valued skills (Gardner, 1991).

Some of this conflict may arise from the early attitudes of education which "threw aside the child's 'knowledge' derived from parents, community, and personal experience" and "demanded a state of ignorance" instead (Hendrick, 1990, p 47). Hamlyn (1975, p 38) considers that education "has little to do with development except as something that may make it (development) possible by providing the right conditions" because a person has to learn how to do certain things within the educational context and knowing how to do these tasks does not come naturally in the same way that one's body grows naturally. In fact, Piaget categorized the child's involvement with the environment into two forms: direct and generally unguided experience, and guided transmission of knowledge through education (Thomas, 1990b).

Gardner (1991, p 117) describes as "universal accomplishments" such things as moral reasoning, graphic skill, language competence and social negotiation which children acquire in pre-school years and in out of school activities through symbolic knowledge and sensory-motor skills which enable them to build up basic theories of the world, of matter, of life and of self. "Scholastic knowledge" (p 119), however, which is encountered on entering institutional schooling and is not universally available to everyone, requires such things as concepts, facts and dates to be learnt. "Culturally valued skills" (p 119) are represented by the people who hold certain roles within the community such as parent, doctor or priest and Gardner contends that the greater robustness of universal ways of knowing and culturally valued skills often hinder internalization of scholastic forms of knowing.

This conflict between scholastic and universal forms of knowledge and cultural roles and skills may be further evident when I compare the provision that schools make for the spiritual and moral development of their pupils and what they do in response to bereavement within the school population, with the opportunities for

all forms of development that children and young people encounter outside of the school context.

## **COMPONENTS OF A HUMAN BEING**

Through the centuries the most common division in the west of the human being has been into mind and body - although many religious traditions have suggested three components (mind, body and spirit/soul) whereby emotional development was associated with spirit/soul. It is not within the scope of this thesis to consider physical development except to note its fundamental link with intellectual and emotional development and to briefly explore those links before arguing later in this chapter that, taken together, these three forms of personal development comprise what I shall term the 'core self.'

## **INTELLECTUAL OR COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Of the many traditional subjects of intellectual enquiry, some that seem pertinent to an analysis of the links between bereavement and moral and spiritual development and are reflected in chapters 5 and 7 are: memory, attitude formation, motivation, creativity and self-actualization.

### ***Memory***

Memory may be equated with learning since people can only be said to have learnt something when they have remembered it. Although some items stored in the long-term memory are described as 'flashbulb' memories because of the emotional nature of the events (Salovey and Singer, 1989), most memories are eroded or altered with the passing of time or with successive repetition (Brewer, 1986). Therefore, some details of an event may be lost while other details of it are vividly retained. Memories of several events may merge together, and recalled memories may become embellished with new interpretations in the light of subsequent experiences. Difficulties in retrieval from long-term memory may

arise from 'childhood amnesia' (Wetzler and Sweeney, 1986) or unused memories decaying or being eroded because of unpleasant associations (Thomas and Thomas, 1990). These are important points to bear in mind when examining the stories respondents of different ages tell of their bereavement experiences (see chapters 7 and 8).

### ***Attitude formation***

Attitudes are positive or negative feelings that a person holds about ideas, people or objects. They are normally regarded as enduring, although subject to modification by experience and persuasion, and likely to be predispositions to action. 'Information' dependence and 'affect' dependence in parent-child interactions may enable parental attitudes to influence children's viewpoints (Keil, 1990). For example, the way in which parents present information about the world, people and events (such as a death) influences the way the child structures and processes subsequent information, and the child's dependence upon his or her parents to meet physical and emotional needs (such as grief reactions) also maximizes the potential for parental ideas to dominate.

### ***Motivation***

Motivation theory, which assumes that every action is directed towards a goal, focuses on the causes for the initiation, continuation or cessation and direction of behaviour. A common view taken in analysing motivation is that two opposing forces, equilibrium and disequilibrium, interact to motivate a person. The force towards equilibrium is towards constancy and balance while that towards disequilibrium is towards uncertainty, excitement, activity and change. Theories of motivation consider that behaviour is either initiated outward from within people (proactive) or in response to external forces that disturb their equilibrium (reactive) (Day, 1990). The response of a child or young person to the death of someone they know is initially reactive but, over time, it may develop into proactivity. Several writers have linked outstanding deeds and activities to a motivation to

achieve learned in the face of loss (Albert, 1971; Eisenstadt, 1978; Storr, 1989; Suedfield and Bluck, 1993).

### ***Creativity, self-actualization and self-concept***

While Koestler (1975) describes the three domains of creativity as humour, discovery (science) and art, creativity itself is one of the twelve traits that Maslow (1970) identifies in people whom he considers to be self-actualized. Such people are original and energetic and less inhibited by convention and culture than ordinary people, which means that they often encounter society's disapproval also. Two other noteworthy traits Maslow names are: (a) an appreciation of the good and simple things of life characterized by reactions of awe, wonder, pleasure, ecstasy and freshness and (b) mystic experiences manifest in visions of being transformed into a more meaningful, appreciative person and of pleasure, expansiveness and momentary loss of self-consciousness (see also chapter 3).

Self-concept develops as children become more aware of their own being and functioning. However, as they recognize that significant others such as family members and 'generalized others' such as peers and teachers (Mead, 1934) ascribe worth to some but not all experiences, they also learn a sense of self based on such valuing - and, perhaps, an 'ideal self' to which to aspire. Children may come to perceive their self-actualizing tendencies as 'bad' because they do not conform to the expectations of others (Meador and Rogers, 1984). It is interesting that depression and suicide ideation in childhood or adulthood are often attributed to low self-concept resulting from the death of a significant other, especially a parent during childhood (Berlinsky and Biller, 1982).

Children learn to recognize their abilities through being effective agents of change in their environment but a sense of learned helplessness or guilt may develop if events seem to happen to them without any cause and without their involvement. This is particularly pertinent to a child's experience of death and the opportunities to attend the funeral or say good-bye to the deceased. Feeling that the deceased

left suddenly or without reason, or because of something the child did, may exacerbate a sense of lack of self-control or challenge self-concept.

Development of cognition or intellect is not isolated from physical and emotional development. Although the topics mentioned above may be analysable as intellectual activities, they are manifest through bodily actions and involve emotions. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any situation in which a human being is not, in some way, feeling or expressing an emotion and an inability to do so would be perceived as distinctly non-human.

## **EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The components of emotion have been similarly defined as complexes of three parts: thought, feeling and wish (Kagan, 1978) or cognition, desire and affect (Oakley, 1992). Thoughts or cognition (intellectual development) are the beliefs that people hold about themselves, other people and events - whether correct or not. Desires and wishes are the motives - whether noble or not - that drive people to action - and mainly depend on physical development for expression. Feelings and affectivity (emotional development) are the responses people feel - without any biological or psychological analysis of the connections between them. Such a definition may explain why emotions are variously seen as either motives for actions (desires and wishes), or having the ability to touch, affect, arouse or stir (affect and feelings) or subject to assessments of rationality (thoughts and cognition).

This view can be used to enlighten Dunlop's (1984) definition of affective experiences as comprising either emotions or moods.

- Experiences of surrender of agency, loss of control, being overwhelmed, taken over, and being completely knocked off course (eg: in rage, love, grief and pain) are predominantly affective but must include an element of cognition

for the loss of control to be identified. The desire present may be mainly active (although in the case of grief, it is unsuccessful activity) such as wanting to attack, be with, recover or remove someone or something.

- Being moved, stirred or excited by an object (eg: in joy, wonder, delight, indignation, pity, admiration and disgust) whether perceived, remembered or imagined involves cognition of something or someone and affective responses which may be calm rather than violent. The desire present may be more passive than active such as wanting to share something with another person, to remain in or move from a place, and to speak to or assist another person in some, as yet undefined, way.
- Experiences of wants, needs and impulses and seeking satisfaction or completion which 'take us out of ourselves' and may be either self-related or other-related are less easy to define by named emotions. Although cognition is less specific, it must be present in order to drive the desire towards action (eg: wanting to give money to a charity - whether out of a sense of guilt, pleasure or good fortune - but not knowing which one to choose) while the affective response present may be predominantly passive or calm.
- Moods, which are subjective colouring of experiences, have a wide range and may be defined stereotypically as depression, cheerfulness, anxiety, or feeling 'blue'. Cognition strongly dominates affectivity which, in its turn, impels or hinders the desire to act.

However, a distinction can be made between emotions and moods. Emotions have an identifiable cause, are relatively short lasting and have a specific effect on judgement, while moods have no identifiable cause, last longer and have an indiscriminate effect on judgement.

## **Grief and other emotions as paradigms**

The perception that grief involves a loss of control, is intractable and accompanied by helpless or passive feelings may explain the difference between this 'emotion' and others. This perception may also indicate why dealing with grief following the death of a loved one is such a significant achievement in human development since death is an event that cannot be changed or undone.

Peters (1972a) comments that the tendency to take fear and anger as paradigms has maintained the conceptual connection that both philosophers and psychologists perceive to exist between 'emotion' and 'action' rather than - as he posits - between 'motive' and 'action,' and 'emotion' and 'passivity'. He argues:

If sorrow, grief and wonder were taken as paradigms, this connection would surely be most implausible, for as Koestler puts it: 'The purely self-transcending emotions do not tend towards action, but towards quiescence, tranquillity and catharsis' (p 471).

However, sorrow and grief share certain important common characteristics which wonder and awe do not. 'Grief' can be seen as consisting of two aspects: the emotion of grief and the process of grieving (Attig, 1991). Grief may be a debilitating response made to the intellectual recognition that a loved person, animal or precious object has been irretrievably lost (although reactions to loss of an object tend to be less severe and enduring than to loss of an animal or human), the desire that it not have occurred and the feelings of pain at the impossibility of fulfilling that desire. The coping process of grieving and learning to live with the loss is complex, challenging and spread over a period of time.

Kubler-Ross (1969) posited five stages through which dying people pass and Bowlby (1980/1981) adapted this notion to describe the experience of bereavement also. Although such firm 'stage' thinking has been superseded by the softer category of 'phases' (Saunders, 1989) and tasks (Worden, 1991), the following list, while not definitive, includes the most frequent and obvious

cognitive-emotional manifestations of grief and grieving: numbness, shock, disbelief, denial, confusion, restlessness, searching, helplessness, yearning, conflict, anger, hostility, guilt, frustration, shame, fear of death, withdrawal, disorganization, despair, bargaining, relief, forgiveness, hope, self-awareness, calmness, loneliness, empathy and compassion. Accordingly it can be seen that paradigmatic emotions such as anger, fear and guilt, are only a few of the many emotional responses that constitute the broader umbrella term 'grief'. Although these thoughts, emotions, sensations and behaviours are not desired and bereaved people expect to 'get over' them and to return to a more settled emotional lifestyle in time, the experience of grief and the process of grieving are likely to occur to everyone at some point in their lives.

By contrast, awe and wonder are short lived or occurrent emotional responses, lasting for minutes rather than hours, made to the intellectual recognition that something or someone - a person, animal, object or even an event - is inexplicable, dreadful and fearful, or new, unexpected and extraordinary. Since these emotions are often "inspired by the natural world, mystery, or human achievement" (National Curriculum Council (NCC), 1993, p 2), such things as snowflakes, stars, autumn leaves, sunsets, animals, music, forms of art and items of intricacy may prompt them. There are no particular physical sensations associated with these emotions (although it is possible that some of those mentioned for grief might briefly occur) and a response to them may be expressed through art or music, contemplation or silence or simply thinking about them. Although many people experience these emotions only rarely, they may desire their return and consider them to be highlights in their lives (see also chapter 3).

Thus, although it is evident that grief is a more appropriate paradigm than wonder - since it is a common human experience - its obstinate nature, variety of cognitive-emotional responses, longer duration and inevitable non-active outcome makes it harder to analyse. Fear and anger, on the other hand, are more frequently experienced than wonder, more reliably recognized in occurrent facial

expressions and bodily behaviours, are of shorter duration and tend towards observable action.

Oakley (1992) argues that grief is an emotion which promotes interpersonal qualities while wonder is one that does not. After describing grief as

an appropriate indication of the depth of one's love and attachment to one's beloved, which are themselves important human goods (p 84)

he notes that, "from a moral point of view" there is an important difference between compassion and resentment, and embarrassment. While compassion, like grief, "plays an important role in promoting love and friendship", resentment only "undermines interpersonal relationships and one's sense of self-worth", and embarrassment "seems neither essentially involved in, nor a serious threat to such human relationships."

Therefore, Oakley argues, compassion and resentment are morally significant emotions because they contribute to or detract from human flourishing while embarrassment and other emotions like it - such as awe, nostalgia and intrigue - are not morally significant because they "do not figure importantly in relation to human virtues and vices" (p 79). In this way 'grief' can be seen as a manifestation of involvement in and commitment to other people through love and friendship which are some of the highest forms of human achievement.

### **The social construction of emotion**

The view that emotions are cognition-based and involve forming and holding attitudes also provides a basis for the constructionist principle that emotions are socioculturally acquired responses (Armon-Jones, 1986a). From this additional perspective a view may be obtained of the part that emotions play in language, moral order and social functioning in the lives of individuals, their society and culture.

As I have shown, a variety of words are often used (especially in English) in order to discriminate between fine shades of emotional quality (eg: numb, shocked, confused) and although one person may say that she is 'numb' in response to a death and another that he is 'confused', there is no way of knowing that their feeling is not the same. Language also enables descriptions of how people usually feel and respond in certain situations to be perpetuated through written and oral forms in sayings, proverbs, myths, stories and in sacred texts (Bible, Qu'ran, Torah etc). Children are taught them and thereby learn what is the appropriate social and cultural response. This learning, in turn, perpetuates the moral order of a society, by encouraging broadly similar interpretations of linguistic terminology and behaviour since emotion words can be understood as interpreting, rather than describing, behaviour. For example, "You ought to be sorry that your grandmother has died" may imply: "You should cry or show your sorrow." An examination of many emotion words (eg: remorse, shame, regret, guilt) reveals that they presuppose moral concepts, the meaning of which children learn by the explanations their parents and other significant people give them.

Philosophical analysis of emotion into cognition, affect/feeling and desire/wish does not dispute the social constructivist view that emotions are characterized by learned attitudes such as beliefs and judgements and that their contents are determined by the systems of cultural belief and moral values of specific communities (Armon-Jones, 1986a). Emotional behaviour, which is often a set of socially prescribed responses operating in a particular situation, indicates the present commitment of individuals to the values of their culture as well as likely future regulation of behaviour in the same culturally appropriate way. Children may learn that condolences made to the bereaved express the speaker's feelings while affirming the approved social response, and, similarly, the absence of such condolences may confirm them in the belief that not speaking about feelings at such a time is an acceptable social response. Hence, systems of rules regarding behaviour are evolved - usually involving language and social conventions (eg:

Jewish shiva) - which support specific beliefs and judgements, reinforce feelings and wishes, and develop moral and spiritual attitudes. The expression of grief is regulated in different cultures and societies according to such rules and beliefs.

As beliefs concerning maturation and moral development are firmly linked to theories of human development, a tacit assumption prevails that a young child will behave differently (more immaturely) than an older one and that there are a range of emotions that are not applicable to childhood because they presume an adult level of intellectual maturity, self-control and social sensibility. Western society relates virtues to age and expects children to be 'sulky' rather than 'angry', 'kind' rather than 'compassionate', 'innocent' rather than 'prudent', and 'sad' rather than 'grieved' (Armon-Jones, 1986b).

### **Emotional development and education**

Emotional development is neither named nor implied in the Education Reform Act (1988, 2 (a)) which intends that the education that children and young people receive "promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society". Emotional development was neither in the 1944 Act which was concerned with "the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community" (Part 11, 7) nor in the list of eight broad areas of experience considered to be important to all pupils in Curriculum: 11-16 (1977), although it was specifically named, together with social development, as a contributing factor to moral development in The Plowden Report (1967, para 73):

The child forms his [sic] sense of personal worth and his moral sense from early experiences of acceptance, approval and disapproval.

Its omission in 1988 is surprising since, in 1970, Hirst and Peters suggested that the then standard works on child development classified studies under four headings, physical, intellectual, social and emotional, with the latter frequently separated out to construct a fifth dimension, moral development.

The absence of 'emotional' in the present list may be due to historical developments as the 'traditional view' concerning emotions was replaced in the 1970s by a 'new orthodoxy'. The former traditional view maintained that, since emotions are not rational and sway people from their objective purpose and outlook, education must be concerned with inculcating habits of control and developing strategies which prevent emotions from interfering with learning. The latter view held that emotions are rational, cognitive, related to logic and understanding, with no sharp distinction between emotion and thought (Griffiths, 1984). Hirst and Peters (1970, p 50), for example, argued that:

One of the main features of emotional development is the learning of the countless different ways of appraising other people and ourselves in terms of a conceptual scheme which is mainly social in character.

Although the attitudes of Hirst and Peters helped to reassess emotional responses as rational rather than non rational, their belief that reasoning itself is the means whereby emotions are formed not only perpetuated the kind of cognitive bias that Gilligan (1982) decries in Kohlberg's (1981) work but also lacked the balance of cognition, affect and desire that Kagan (1978) and Oakley (1992) propose. Furthermore, even if they are right that emotional responses are appraisals of other people and ourselves, Hirst and Peters seem to overlook the fact that society has constructed and imposed the meanings that individuals subsequently accept.

Although the 'new orthodoxy' introduced a view that emotions are a part of the process of developing rationality, use of the adjective 'emotional' in educational legislation. may still be related to the older traditionalist view that emotions are not influenced by understanding, are only controllable with difficulty, or even that they are not a part of education's remit.

Griffiths (1984), who holds that emotions are both irrational and rational, suggests that there must be room for internal conflict and vacillation since never to

reassess a situation or to change one's mind is itself irrational. She believes that describing children as 'emotional' because they sometimes respond intensely to small events and then seem to forget them - as is often seen in responses to a death - shows how society judges as irrational (and hence as 'emotional') any deviance from a 'normal' view of the constraint of feelings.

In the light of such ambiguity, the government may have considered it inappropriate to add such a dubious aspect of development to a list designed to prepare "pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life" (ERA, 1988, 2 (a)).

### **COMPONENTS OF THE CORE SELF**

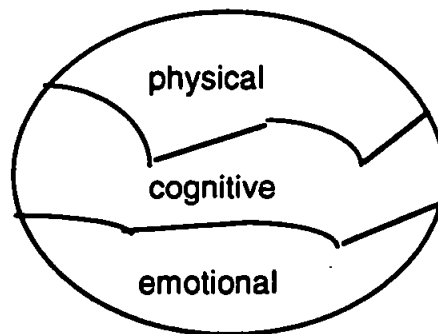
It is my belief that physical, intellectual and emotional development proceed in tandem in an individual human being when 'normal' and 'suitable' (although idiographically varying) social and cultural conditions prevail which involve stimulation by self, other people, events and things. Humans develop physically according to cumulative, irreversible, self-regulating laws of maturation which conform to the orthogenetic principle (Werner, 1957) and the mind and emotions develop in accordance with the maturation of these organs of the body. All three forms of development, in their turn, reflect the "regularities and idiosyncrasies" of the culture in which they take place (Gardner, 1991, p 115).

Physical development is the foundation upon which both intellectual and emotional development depend since, unless organs and muscles develop, thinking and feeling have no location in which to occur. It is the most apparent form of development and can be easily measured or assessed numerically. Intellectual development may also be assessed in common sense terms regarding universal accomplishments and/or cultural skills but specific forms of assessment are required to measure scholastic knowledge. Emotional development, however,

is the hardest of the three forms to measure and, even more than the other two, may be subject to value judgements in terms of appropriateness and quality.

Thus I suggest that our bodies, our minds and our emotions contribute to the development of our 'core self' and that these three fundamental components are the means whereby the kind of development that is described as 'social', 'cultural', 'spiritual' and 'moral' is expressed.

**Figure 1. 5** Model of the 'core self'

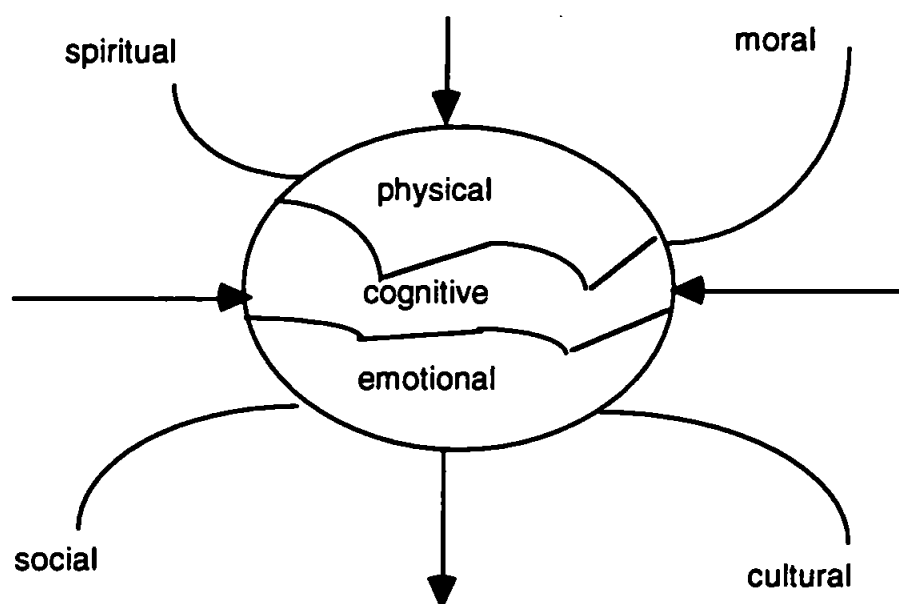


By proposing this analysis I am not adopting a rigidly reductionist stance but attempting to further explore the levels-of-organization hypothesis (Schneirla, 1957) which suggests that although there are different levels of organic organization, the laws of the higher, psychological level cannot be reduced to or predicted from the laws of the lower, physical, chemical level because such reductions fail to understand the emergent quality of each higher level. For example, people have unique idiographic characteristics such as being able to love or being governed by ethical constraints which are qualitatively discontinuous and cannot be understood by mere reduction to neural, hormonal and muscular processes or basic constituent parts.

Therefore, physical development is insufficient in itself to explain either intellectual or emotional development; intellectual development is insufficient in itself to explain either physical or emotional development; and emotional development is insufficient in itself to explain either physical or intellectual development.

The environment and the 'core self' inter-react to produce responses which have come to be termed 'social' and 'cultural' and 'moral' and 'spiritual' (see chapters 2 and 3). Social, cultural and moral responses tend to be perceived in terms of relationships with other people while spiritual responses tend to be viewed as personal ones - although, this is not a definitive definition. Such responses - to the environment, experience, society and culture - comprise inter-relating forms of behaviour, modes of thinking and patterns of feeling which are subsequently construed as either spontaneous or coercive - according to whether the individual views its own nature as active or passive, its development as goal-directed or cause related, and the extent to which human will and supernatural powers are considered to play a part.

**Figure 1. 6** Interaction between the environment and the core self



I do not think that moral and spiritual responses exist in their own right, as components of our 'core self,' but rather depend on the mind, the body and the emotions for expression. However, because they function through those core components, they sometimes seem as if they are 'part' of us.

The expression of responses that are termed 'moral' and 'spiritual' depend upon such things as cognitive acquisition of knowledge, socially constructed attitudes

and opinions, subjective and objective interpretations of the meaning and cause of emotions, feelings and moods, as well as use of the limbs and the five senses of the body. Morality, for example, may be expressed through *thinking* which considers such concepts as justice, compassion or retribution, or *feelings* which can be described as love, compassion or guilt, or displayed in *actions* such as sharing something with or helping another person. Spirituality, also, may be expressed through *thinking* which considers concepts of holiness, reverence or respect, or *feelings* of adoration, transcendence or awe, or displayed in *actions* such as fasting, prayer or creative activity.

A sense of wonder at the intricacies of the composition of flowers or snow flakes arises naturally, and whether or not it is considered to be a 'spiritual' response depends upon an understanding and acceptance of ideas about a creator God or life force. Wonder and awe and the belief that God or a divine power has caused such compositions can, I suppose, be termed 'religious spirituality' while wonder and no such beliefs can be termed 'secular spirituality' (King, 1985a, 1985b; Bakewell, 1993; Newby, 1994). However, the feeling of wonder itself is a purely natural and neutral one, caused by the mind's cognizance of the thing perceived. James (1960, p 47) who, I believe, used 'religious' in the 1900s in the same way that I use 'spiritual' here, similarly observed:

There is religious fear, religious love, religious awe, religious joy ... But religious love is only man's [sic] natural emotion of love directed to a religious object ... religious awe is the same organic thrill which we feel in a forest at twilight, or in a mountain gorge; only this time it comes over us at the thought of our supernatural relations...

Accordingly I contend that 'morality' and 'spirituality' have to be interpreted through thinking, feeling and doing and are not independent of these components.

## **CHAPTER TWO : MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Introduction**

This chapter continues to explore human development (body, mind and emotions) from the particular standpoint of that area of human experience designated as morality. Throughout there is an attempt to examine statements within recent British educational documents concerning the moral (and sometimes spiritual) development of pupils against ancient and universal ideas concerning the nature and form of morality. A critique of the former is offered in the light of the latter and Kohlberg's work is examined in detail. The chapter ends by exploring the type of thinking, feeling and behaviour - commonly designated as 'moral' - which may arise from the experience of bereavement.

### **Universal ideas about morality**

... moral maturing involves a lifetime of activity. We endlessly reshape our moral lives in a process of continuing progress. (Moran, 1987, p 16)

The 1988 Education Reform Act, like the 1944 Education Act, requires schools to provide for and promote the moral development of their pupils. This assumption, however, needs examining since it lays particular emphasis upon a limited part of a person's life (5-16 or 18 years) and the special influence of certain adults (teachers). This may lead to a focus on development from the perspective of 'what is happening now' under rather specific circumstances (behaviour, feelings and learning in school) and to a neglect of what has been completed so far (from all experiences of life including school) as well as what is likely to occur in the future (from all experiences of life beyond compulsory schooling). Certainly the school years are important for establishing the foundation for all aspects of development but, since development must be a life long process, I suggest that the role played by schools may be rather less than is commonly assumed and

that, for bereaved pupils at least, factors other than school may be more significant in their 'moral development.'

Beliefs about morality seem to be derived from at least three origins. The most ancient is probably the belief that a supernatural being/principle exists which embodies goodness and reveals to humanity the right way to live. Allied with this belief is the second notion that natural laws govern both nature and human behaviour which can be rationally comprehended. From a more human viewpoint is a third idea which recognizes that harmonious social behaviour and agreement on codes of conduct are necessary foundations for peace and security. It can be argued that only the third idea gives rise to questions of moral urgency since the first two merely require obedience to pre-existing powers or structures.

The first approach to morality is particularly reflected in philosophical, religious and common-sense theories of human development which are ancient in origin. Classical ethical theories such as Platonism believed that moral judgements reflect the moral entities (justice, beauty, good) that exist in the world, while Stoicism held that good or evil depends upon an individual's ability to respond to the environment and that indifference reduces the power other things can exercise. Some religious theories (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) contain moral codes considered to be the expression of God's will for humanity's conduct and, since the giver of these codes is deemed omniscient and omnipotent, what they contain is held to be good and right - whether revealed through sacred text, the life of its prophets or founder, the tradition's pronouncements or individual insight.

Religious philosophies have mainly been concerned with the kind of relationships individuals have with God (or a divine or life force) and other people, as well as how they prepare for death and what, whether through transmigration, reincarnation, rebirth or resurrection, is believed to lie beyond that event. The role of cause and effect, human free-will and supernatural intervention are explained through such beliefs as karma, pre-destination, election, and the will of God.

Since important features of religious theories are to seek what is good for oneself and other people and to live in the right way (and, within Hinduism and Buddhism particularly, to die in the right way), they can also be seen as theories of moral development. These approaches to morality will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

The second approach spans both philosophy and psychology while the third approach seem to be best exemplified by more recently evolved social and psychological theories. Both approaches are evident in Piaget's and Kohlberg's investigations of moral development which, largely influenced by the biological model of development, focus on cognitive understanding of natural principles. Piaget (1932) investigated the moral thinking of children regarding the formulation of rules, the relation of intention to the attribution of culpability and the concepts of distributive and retributive justice and Kohlberg (1958) followed Piaget in comparing moral development to learning the rules of a game. Both men considered that an understanding of simple, externally imposed rules precedes an understanding of complex ones and that game-playing itself encourages a respect for rules and an understanding of how they can be made and changed. These approaches to morality will also be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

I think that morality cannot easily be separated from social behaviour which, in its turn, is influenced by the emotional factors which affect relationships between people. Morality can be broadly defined as that area of human behaviour that is concerned with judgements of right and wrong and good and bad, behaviour to be avoided or undertaken, relationships between people, other living organisms and the environment, and the interplay between thinking, action and feelings in both self and others. It will, however, never be easy to establish how far we are what we are and think and behave as we do because of our phylogeny. Although humanity has become differentiated from the animal world through language, laws and technology, the kind of order we create may never be perfect and will always be dominated by the knowledge of our own finitude. It is because we are as we

are in our environment - with particular physical characteristics, needs, feelings, sensations, interests and forms of consciousness - that the form of morality that we have arises. If we were otherwise, morality might be different but, since our morality is limited by our nature, I think it is not unreasonable to argue as Hirst (1974) does that what we are unable to achieve cannot be described as what ought to be.

It is interesting to see that some modern philosophers consider classical ethical theories such as Christianity and utilitarianism to have attempted the impossible by describing and prescribing moral behaviour since it has been argued that only an analysis of the language defining moral judgements is really possible. It now seems evident to many twentieth century scientific thinkers that deducing moral precepts from theological premises is, as Hume and Moore both suggested, fallacious, since metaphysical beliefs about the will of God or humanity's relationship with God cannot be used to prescribe concrete human behaviour. Certainly beliefs about the origin, nature and purpose of the world and of our place in it may greatly influence behaviour but, since they can never, in any logical sense, be proved true or false, they must remain only beliefs.

Present day views regarding the moral development of people - and of children and young people in particular - seem to be influenced by ideas from four, sometimes conflicting, sources developed from those ways of thinking described above:

- religious (usually theistic) frameworks which underpin a society
- philosophical theories which often express non-theistic beliefs about moral behaviour
- social conventions (such as gender roles) that have evolved in a society; and
- scientific and psychological theories of cognitive growth and learning that education, particularly, has adopted.

The interplay between these four sources is apparent in moral development theories such as Kohlberg's which claims that universal, natural principles of justice can be rationally known, and in government documents relating to the inspection of moral and spiritual development which subscribe to Platonic notions of moral entities and, like the Ten Commandments, stress avoidance of harm.

## **RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES OF MORALITY**

A traditional link between religion and morality is apparent in the ancient debate whether God wills something because it is good or whether it is good because God wills it. Because belief in God is a matter of faith and internal commitment, it also becomes a matter of internal constraint and conscience to keep laws believed to be God's. In this way a difference may become apparent between believers and non-believers. Wright and Cox (1967) found that both groups generally subscribe to a social morality which affects other people as well as themselves (not cheating, bullying) but those who believe that their whole life is in God's hands tend to pass stricter judgements on issues of both social morality and private morality (sexual behaviour, drinking alcohol) in terms of "wrong-ness" and to see little distinction between the two areas. In addition to the belief that a moral code has been given by a supernatural being, other common characteristics of many religions which affect moral thinking are the beliefs that such a supernatural being/power knows what we think and do, that our lives have significance and purpose, and that we continue to live in some form after death when our deeds and motives will be judged or used to decide our future. Christianity, the main religious tradition of the British Isles, particularly stresses these beliefs in its doctrine of a saviour who died to save humanity from the result of its sin in both this life and the afterlife.

The decline in religious influence in British society has been displayed in doubt at the existence of God and despair at the futility of human existence but there seems to be a renewed interest, through accounts of people's near-death

experiences, in what happens to humans while dying and after death (Kastenbaum, 1995). Although not directly contradicting Christian teaching, these popular accounts may have alleviated much of the fear that once surrounded the dying process since they describe encounters with warmth and light, colourful, pleasant surroundings and deceased loved ones. It is difficult to say how far these accounts - which imply that the experience of dying and ultimate destination is the same for all people - have affected belief in an afterlife, whether containing judgement or not. It is reasonable to suggest that, as the notion of being called to account for our deeds after death is dispelled, there will be a trend within moral thinking to maintain positive human interaction for its own sake - which is in line with the third, socially derived belief about why we should be moral.

An outcome of the recognition in the Education Reform Act (1988, 8 [3]) that "the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian" is that Religious Education in schools "should seek to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and awareness of Christianity, as the predominant religion in Great Britain," (DfE 1/94, 16) and that the daily act of collective worship is to be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" (DfE, 60). The reasoning behind this legislation seems to be that, if they do not regularly attend a Christian place of worship or belong to one of the other religious groups represented in Great Britain, young people can be made aware of Christianity's influence upon this country's culture, traditions and morality through schooling. It is not clear whether education about Christianity - as well as "the other principal religions represented in Great Britain" (DfE 1/94, 16) - and broadly Christian acts of collective worship are expected to contribute to pupils' understanding of their cultural inheritance or the development of a specifically Christian moral attitude. Patten (1992, p 10) certainly prefers development of the latter because he believes that:

the loss of [the fear of eternal damnation] has meant a critical motive has been lost to young people when they decide whether to try to be good citizens or to be criminals.

The removal of the confessional approach to the teaching of religion in schools means that acceptance of or conformity to Christian doctrine or moral codes dependent on them can no longer be expected but it is useful to examine the implicit influence of Judaeo-Christian thought on British culture and education. While Christianity generally interprets Judaic scripture as 'old testament' prophecy, teaching and history related to the 'new testament' life of Jesus, closer inspection of the Torah reveals development in the moral thinking and lifestyles of a nation and a travelling people which relates to the development of moral thinking today.

Genesis asserts that the world and its people are formed by, accountable to, and destined for God's purpose and that humans are recalcitrant especially in response to the God-given knowledge of good and evil. Exodus contains a God-given moral code mainly exemplified by restraint from harm ("Thou shalt not") and reciprocal punishments (21:24: "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" KJV) but sets a higher value on human life than the comparable Babylonian Code of Hammurabi. Leviticus details how to make sacrifices to God to atone for sin and guilt and to encourage peace, and Deuteronomy (1:16-17) introduces the concepts of justice and equity in settling disputes, which are later seen as fundamental characteristics of God (Jeremiah 9: 23-24) and inevitable human responses to God's revelation of himself (Micah 6: 6-8).

Although the shema's original admonition to love God with all one's heart, soul and might (Deuteronomy 6: 3-5) was to encourage, in this life, well-being, prosperity ("that it may be well with thee" KJV) and the birth of future generations, the context of Jesus's reply regarding this law in Luke (10: 25-28) and Matthew (19: 16-22) suggests that keeping it leads to eternal life - although in both cases Jesus' advice is ambiguous: "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (KJV) and "this do, and thou shalt live" (KJV). In Luke's account Jesus accepts, in addition to the shema, the principle, described in Leviticus 19:18, of loving one's neighbour as oneself. This principle has become the Christian Golden Rule

of reciprocal caring behaviour towards others (Luke 6: 31; Matthew 7:12), although it should be noted that, in its original context, such care and concern for others was a result of one's relationship with God.

Two moral principles have thus emerged from Judaeo-Christian thinking: (1) the use of justice in dealing with others as a manifestation of God's character and presence in one's life, and (2) the practice of loving other people, as well as God, in order both to prosper in this life and inherit eternal life. St Paul's formulation of the concept that Jesus' death atoned for the sins of the world may be an example of the principle of either justice (one perfect man acting on behalf of all sinful people in order to save them from God's inevitable damning eternal judgement) or care and benevolence (despite his innocence, one man willingly died because of his love for humanity and in obedience to God's loving plan that such a sacrifice was the only way). Imitating Jesus' selflessness - driven either by the incentive of reward in the next life or of personal satisfaction in this one - has become a characteristic of Christian living related to self-discipline and relationships with others, but the desire for deliverance from human frailty or sinfulness has expressed itself in many forms beside the Christian search for salvation. Socratic belief in self-knowledge and the existential quest for wholeness and authenticity are two examples.

Several bereaved respondents in this study (see chapter 7) have debated the qualities of God in terms of justice and/or loving care and I shall show later in this chapter how these two principles pervade some of the debate about the form and content of morality.

Morality, however, may be grounded in faith related to religious or non-religious terms. Fowler (1981) makes the distinction between faith, belief and religion and relates his work to Piaget's logical thinking, Selman's (1980) social perspective taking and Kohlberg's justice reasoning. He describes faith as setting one's heart on something and of living in loyalty to that commitment.

If we set aside the nature of the relationship between humanity and the divine, the most obvious point at which religion and morality relate - and thereby also link with an understanding of morality from social and psychological viewpoints - is in the experience of the other person as a person. Buber's assertion that the other person must be seen as 'Thou' rather than 'It' combines religious notions of God's immanence with moral notions of justice, care and respect for people. "It is this sense of being transcended in relationships which generates respect for the other as an equal" (Wright, 1983, p 115) and I believe it is through this sense, also, that the significance of the loss of such a relationship through death can be morally understood. After death a transition must be made between knowing the other as 'Thou,' a living, responding human, and sensing the inanimate 'It-ness' of the corpse or the absence of an interactive 'I-Thou' relationship. Thinking about why the death occurred or where the deceased now is may involve value judgements about purpose and quality of life which previously have been unexplored. Loss of the other 'Thou' - whether much loved or not - may even affect one's experience of the 'Eternal Thou' and change, although temporarily, relationships with other humans from 'I-Thou' to 'I-It' as grief manifests itself in anger, disbelief, fear or shock.

The main differences between religious-philosophical and social or psychological approaches to morality seem to be in the source of their authority. The former approach considers that its values and standards reflect the nature of an external divine source or ultimate principle while the latter approaches look to the reasoning, behavioural and emotive aspects of humanity itself for reasons why morality is the way it is. An examination of morality from the latter viewpoint now follows.

## **SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF MORALITY**

### **Morality: its nature, forms of expression and use of the term**

Moral considerations are present in our thinking, feeling and behaving but it is obviously easier to assess external forms (behaviour) rather than internal forms (thinking and emotions) and to consider - whether correctly or not - that behaviour is the final expression of what an individual thinks and feels. I also think there is a distinction to be made between a moral action and a moral person since some approaches to analysing 'morality' speak in terms of duties and consequences while others speak in terms of qualities of human character. While publicly observable conduct and verbal behaviour is popularly deemed to be 'moral' if it conforms to social expectations, rules and norms, there are few philosophical theories of ethics which consider such behaviour to be a sufficient condition for either an action or a person to be deemed moral. Since the reasons for overt conformity to rules and laws may include simple respect for rules as rules, anticipated disapproval or advantage, or altruism, such behaviour is merely a necessary but not sufficient condition for morality. Instead, a consideration is usually made of either people's motives, intentions and reasons for action or the goodness of the predictable consequences of an action for other people and society in general.

Ethical analysis of the kind that Socrates and the utilitarians undertook considered what is right or good or necessary in life and made normative judgements, all things being equal, about what kind of behaviour is best. This approach works reasonably well within a homogenous society but falters when different standards co-exist within the same society because individuals inevitably compare their standards and rules with those of others and may conclude that morality is relative. By contrast, empirical analysis of morality by anthropologists, sociologists, historians and psychologists tries to describe the phenomena of morality in terms of theories of human nature related to ethical questions.

Although this approach may lay itself open to the charge of accepting or promoting moral relativism, it recognizes the variety of influences that impinge upon any society's moral code and also notes broad similarities between societies.

Another approach to understanding morality comes from metaethical analysis which, avoiding both normative and empirical questions, tries to answer logical, semantic and epistemological questions instead such as 'What is the meaning of the expression morally right or good?' and 'How can ethical judgements be justified?' This approach tries to stand outside the practical situation in order to philosophically postulate a form of morality that logically moves towards a higher form or end-point, such as Kohlberg's stages 6 and 7 (see later in this chapter).

In asking 'What is x?' we may be asking about either the meaning of the word under analysis or the nature of the thing being analysed and, in the case of the question 'What is moral?' it is much easier to describe agreed examples of moral behaviour and moral thinking than to describe what 'moral' means (Wilson, 1973). Wilson suggests that an understanding of morality should entail analysing what concepts people have (eg: of honesty) and what concepts or principles they think they ought to use in their behaviour. He says it is also important to know what feelings and emotions people have under normal circumstances which support their belief that they should use these concepts and principles, and what knowledge or awareness they have of the relevant surrounding circumstances and of their own and other people's feelings. Also important are what social skills people have and whether they bring any of the above named factors to bear on situations in real life. Such an analysis of 'what is moral' may start to reveal the content of people's thinking regarding their concepts and principles, the form of that expression under both 'normal' and 'conflicted' circumstances and the inter-relatedness of content and form with emotions, specific circumstances and prevailing social conditions.

A focus on the meaning of morality as having a particular content has led to studies and definitions of 'moral' in terms of not cheating (Hartshorne and May, 1928-30), valuing life, reciprocity, not cheating, stealing and lying (Bull, 1969), justice (Kohlberg, 1984) and caring and responsibility (Gilligan, 1982) - some of which are likely to be culturally specific. For example, many Saudi Arabian adolescents express a desire to be honest and reliable and to uphold religious (Islamic) principles, while English adolescents seem more concerned with personal physical appearance and the impact of other people on them (Simmons and Simmons, 1994). The principles of equality and collective happiness are considered important by Israeli kibbutzniks while unity and sanctity of life are important for Indians (Richards and Davison, 1992) and when I lived in Japan I was aware of the importance in that culture of honour and responsibility, often linked to seniority and age. A study of British children's morality in terms of those concepts (or Japanese children in terms of justice or empathy) would probably reveal the extent of implicit cultural assumptions in definitions of morality.

Wilson (1973) observes that the term 'moral' is used in English in a variety of ways. It is often contrasted with 'immoral,' usually in the context of approval or disapproval; used as a description of action or belief to indicate a matter of taste or opinion; or in a sociological sense to describe the particular code or set of morals of a society. It is also used as a conceptual classification of ways of thinking and behaving which express such things as social and religious beliefs. These examples clearly indicate how its use can range from explicit personal disapproval of specific behaviour to broad and general descriptions of socio-religious beliefs and practices.

Because of the linguistic similarities in English between moral judgements ("Suicide is wrong") and factual statements ("Ice cream is sweet") a mistaken belief can arise that moral statements are 'true' in the same way that factual statements are, and that 'wrongness' exists as an entity in much the same way that 'sweetness' does. As Stevenson (1944) noted, moral language may also

express feelings or personal approval covertly designed to influence other people ("It's good to see pupils sharing their possessions with each other") or overt imperatives to conform ("Don't shout out in class"). In fact, because description and evaluation are often so entangled it is difficult to separate them. 'Murder' and 'suicide,' for example, describe death but also give society's or the speaker's opinion about how or why it occurred.

Confusion may also arise when the same word is used in normative, empirical and moral contexts. For example, 'right' or 'wrong' may be used to describe both the answer to an arithmetical question and the acceptable way to dress for school, and 'good' and 'bad' may be used to describe both an action that practically harms another person and the flavour of food. Although children's cognitive development usually enables them to identify the different concepts being used, both children and adults may use such words indiscriminately and interchangeably.

### **Approaches to analysing morality**

Three main philosophical approaches (consequential, deontological and virtue-based) which are often used to define the term 'moral' focus on either behaviour (What ought I to do?) or character and personality (What kind of person ought I to be?) (Kahn, 1991). These descriptions identify the conflicting need always to look at both the individual who thinks, feels and acts in a certain way with how this affects other people.

Moral behaviour can be defined by either the consequences of an action or a person's duty or necessary behaviour in a situation. While both definitions recognize that the individual is related to others in a social context, the former approach tends to stress the larger group containing self and other people while the latter focuses rather more on the individual decision-maker. Consequential theory proposes that a person should always act in order to produce the best

possible outcome and its most common form, utilitarianism, advocates principles such as prudence, benevolence and justice in order to bring about a utility (such as happiness) for the greatest number of people. This approach can be described as an ethic of the good. Deontological (or duty) theory maintains that there are some moral actions that a person must or must not do. Kant's categorical imperative (which, if followed, should ensure that a person is always acting morally) advocates that people should only act on a maxim which they would will to become a universal law and this approach, which is often described as an ethic of the right, has been adopted by Kohlberg. However, both consequential and deontological approaches have tended to stress the importance of action (behaviour) more than attitude (thinking and feeling) and such an emphasis is one which I believe NCC and OFSTED need to take account of when compiling lists of behaviour to promote or avoid.

In contrast to deontological and consequential theories, virtue-based approaches advocate character traits such as courage, temperance and wisdom (Aristotle); sympathy (Hume); empathy and consideration (Wilson et al, 1967); pro-social behaviour (Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg, 1977); and powers, dispositions and rational thinking (Dunlop, 1981). Dunlop (p 8) suggests that since a person's moral character may be comprised of both conscious moral choices (eg: conscientiousness) and natural dispositions (eg: goodheartedness), the former, rather than the latter, constitute "the 'deposit' of moral character" because the prevalence of positive rather than negative impulses is a result of self-discipline. Although this approach appears to give importance to thinking and feeling, it may also tend to reinforce previously discussed cultural assumptions.

The role of feeling and emotion in morality, however, needs to be recognized since it is an indication of thinking and can also act as an impulse to action. For example, a person's experience of sorrow indicates a belief that someone or something of value has been lost (whether permanently or temporarily) and is likely to prompt actions (eg: searching) or other feelings (eg: regret) in order to

alleviate that loss. Both searching and regret may, in their turn, lead to beliefs of guilt and blame and further actions or emotions denoting anger at other people (eg: arguments, law suits) at oneself (eg: depression, self-harm) or God (ie: loss of faith). In the case of bereavement these are certainly common reactions (Stedeford, 1984). For example, feeling guilty may have a natural root in our psychology but how we attribute that guilt is a result of the way we structure our lives. The belief that either a doctor, oneself or God is responsible for the death of a loved one reveals part of our fundamental outlook on life.

### **Requirements for morality**

Within the approaches to analysing morality outlined above there is the perception that explicit behaviour (What ought I to do?) and feelings and thinking related to behaviour (What kind of person ought I to be?) are intentionally cultivated and improved. Hirst (1974) and Wilson et al (1967) believe that in order to define actions as fully moral the individual responsible must be able both to give a reason for them and to consider them voluntarily undertaken. Hirst also suggests that autonomy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for moral behaviour because of the restricting nature of inter-personal and social relationships. Hare (1963), whose definitions shaped Kohlberg's work, considers that a moral judgement must be both prescriptive (containing a categorical imperative to action) and universalizable (containing a point of view that any human being could or should adopt).

Philosophy, religion, sociology and psychology seem united in considering that development in 'morality' is best encouraged through or can be identified by reflection and analysis rather than unconsidered thinking, feeling and behaviour. Such a definition of requirements raises the question whether such 'moral development' can ever be considered to occur without intentional human intervention, whether by self or another person, since we are not always aware of making daily moral choices. However, to have a reason for doing something -

whether consciously expressed or done from habit because such thinking, feeling or acting is well established - does indicate that a form of rationalization or reflection has occurred, even if such thinking is erroneous (eg: my absence did not cause my grandmother to die). Since this rationalizing is our way of making sense of the world, of linking cause and effect and of giving meaning to what happens to us, it is evidence of our attribution of intention and the giving of reasons to our own and others' actions.

### **Definitions of moral development**

As for moral development, I do not think there is any such thing. People may develop in personality and character, as well as in their mode of thinking, but how to be moral is something that *we have to learn*. (Hamlyn, 1975, p 38, my italics)

In moving from discussions of morality per se to those of moral development, Hamlyn voices a fundamental criticism of approaches to moral development through education in schools. He believes that morality, like creativity, has a function in relation to other things and that education can only encourage development by providing the right conditions. Like him, I consider that learning how to be moral is a process of evaluating reasons, circumstances and situations as well as oneself and other people. While 'development' in its broadest sense may be seen as the outcome of such learning, it is not a full or accurate description of the various everyday practical expressions of morality such as upholding principles, recognizing and meeting obligations, acting virtuously, identifying and pursuing worthwhile activities, responding through our emotions to beliefs about ourselves and other people, and undertaking social roles.

There are four broad approaches to the analysis of moral development which, taken together, reflect this complexity. Endogenous theorists (Plato, Neill and Rousseau) hold that moral development occurs mainly through internal mechanisms such as maturation and innatism while exogenous theories (behaviourism and social learning) propose that moral development is the result

of external factors. Interactionist theories (such as psychoanalysis which is particularly concerned with the development of conscience and guilt) holds that both external and internal factors play a necessary although sometimes conflicting part in moral development and structural interaction theorists (Piaget and Kohlberg) propose that moral development occurs through mental equilibrium created by the interaction between individual and environment (Kahn, 1991). This delineation of four approaches (and there may be others) simply shows that people have adopted different and specific perspectives in an attempt to understand the inter-related nature of development within morality in both personal, inter-personal and social contexts.

OFSTED (1994a, p 10, my italics) describes moral development as "pupils' knowledge, understanding, intentions, attitudes and behaviour in relation to what is *right and wrong*." Despite the overview of all aspects of moral development (eg: knowledge, intention and behaviour), this is really a description of moral epistemology (whether moral behaviour and statements are right or wrong, good or bad, true or false), rather than moral ontogeny because using phrases such as 'right' and 'wrong' reflects the Platonic belief that objective realities such as 'rightness' and 'wrongness' (like cold and heat) really exist, and the assumption that everyone agrees upon the meaning of these words. This ambiguity continues in The Framework for Inspection of Schools (OFSTED, 1994b, p 21, my italics) which states that:

moral development is to be judged by how well the school promotes an understanding of the moral principles which allow pupils to tell *right from wrong*, and to *respect other people, truth, justice and property*, and how well they respond, through their behaviour and the views they express.

Here, also, since respect is encouraged for both tangible objects (other people and property) and intangible ones (truth and justice) there is an implication that both forms are readily identifiable. Indeed, how far is 'respect for property' to be applied indiscriminately - to pencil sharpeners and clothing and houses?

The theories of Piaget and Kohlberg have significantly influenced research concerning morality and moral development through their examination of people's thoughts and attitudes in situations of social morality. This form of morality is recognized to be regulated by systems of rules and expectation and Kohlberg's research, in particular, has analysed the thinking of individuals in hypothetical situations regarding conflicting rules or interests of society, institutions, family, peer group and self. Kohlberg's original focus on 'ideal types' (1984) led him to propose 'stages' of justice reasoning, which, ultimately, have come to be generically termed 'stages' of moral development. It is important to bear in mind therefore that (i) Kohlberg deems justice to be the fundamental principle of morality and (ii) he is more interested in ways of reasoning (thinking) than feelings or behaviour.

### **Kohlberg's moral development theory**

Since Kohlberg's theory of moral judgement is the most coherent and well-known approach to analysing moral development through justice reasoning, I shall use it as a basis for much of my explorations (see Appendix 1).

The application of Darwin's theory of evolution to individual human development led to a perception that forms of behaviour evolve from each other by the mechanism of adaptation, and theories of embryological development also led to a belief that change in human development is regulated and organized hierarchically. Piaget's theory of cognitive development originated within the prevailing thinking of embryology and evolution and his conception of specific structural stages in development derive from both biology and logic. He considered that a hierarchy exists since an evolved form of development cannot return to a genetically earlier form because each form is itself qualitatively different, more integrated and differentiated than the form from which it has developed (see also chapter 1). His theories of moral development based upon

reasoning about principles of justice derive from his ideas about stages of logic within cognitive development.

Kohlberg's well-known cognitive-developmental model continues Piagetian definitions and analyses of stages. First, Kohlberg proposes "structured wholes" - a total way of thinking about, rather than attitudes towards, particular situations - which, because such ways of thinking may be used to support either side of an action choice, can help to distinguish between form (the way of thinking) and content (the action choice itself). Kohlberg suggests that analysing the meaning of differences in cultural customs regarding forms of judgement reveals that, despite different content, the form of the argument is often the same. He says that "we can define a moral judgement as 'moral' without considering its content" or "whether it agrees with our own judgements or standards" (1980a, pp 55-56) and, in terms of analyzing the content of moral statements, I think his claim is true since "we" (the test analysers at a higher stage) can see that replies conform, for example to Stage 2 or 3 descriptions. In every day life, however, it may be less easy to accept the thinking of another person as 'moral' if it is substantially different from one's own because, according to Kohlberg's theory, those at pre-conventional and conventional levels cannot understand the reasoning of stages more than one above their own and only people at the post-conventional stage are able to have such a perspective.

The second Piagetian definition implies an invariant sequence, although Kohlberg allows that it is possible for an individual to move at varying speeds, to be half in and half out of a particular stage, and even to stop at any stage. However, when apparent regression in longitudinal respondents appeared to contradict belief in this invariant sequence, bootstrapping measures were applied in order to formally reclassify stages 4, 5 and 6. This way of re-assessing the facts in order to fit theory must create doubt in such an invariant sequence (see chapter 4).

The theory also displays hierarchical integration of moral values which, Kohlberg argues, are not relative to a culture but reflect developmental stages in moral thought since even a young child understands the value of a parent's or an animal's life because of empathy with other living things. I think that the development of the concept of death also influences such emotional development because children's ability to have respect, to care for other living things, and to empathise will be enhanced by their understanding that all living things die, that death cannot be reversed, and that all life-defining functions cease at death (Speece and Brent, 1987)

Kohlberg's theory is concerned with consequences and driven by the principle of justice. It describes moral development as orientations at different stages towards certain broad bands of reasoning, with movement to the next stage caused by internal cognitive reorganization when difficult decisions challenge the limits of current reasoning. Although he originally subdivided Piaget's three stages of justice reasoning into six, Kohlberg later designated stage six as a philosophical rather than an empirical endpoint and proposed the existence of a metaphorical or "soft hypothetical seventh stage" which "appears after the attainment of post-conventional justice reasoning" (1984, p 249). Stage 7 offers a cosmic perspective on life, dealing with questions of meaning in the face of injustice, pain and death (see also chapter four) and the development of such a viewpoint is pertinent to the focus of this thesis. However, stage 7 does not appear in later versions of Kohlberg's theory (see Appendix 1).

Kohlberg (1974) claims that his work is in line with the Christian tradition's philosophical basis of principles derived from natural laws. These laws, which hold that there are universal or natural principles of justice which should guide all societies, are known to people by reason independent of religious revelation. Thus, the sense of justice in a child can be encouraged because it is innate. Kohlberg claims that justice, rather than benevolence, is the only true moral principle because its concept of equity can resolve competing claims which the

concept of maximization rooted in benevolence cannot. When benevolence is manifested as love, empathy, sympathy, human concern, and humanism though, Kohlberg deems it to be mainly a stage 3 virtue, "not a guide to action" (1980a, p 63).

Kohlberg (1980a) suggests that moral judgements tend to be consistent, inclusive, universal, and grounded on objective, impersonal bases. He says that a moral principle is a universal mode of choosing which is applicable to people in all situations (eg: everyone has a right to live) unlike rules such as the Ten Commandments (stage 4) which are prescriptions for action and cannot be universalized (eg: not everyone has a living parent or a wife). Conventional morality (stages 3 and 4) defines good behaviour for a person in one situation but not another and, since such definitions are not fully universal and prescriptive, continual self-contradiction arises. He believes that all principles are present in one form or another from stage 1 onwards, although authority and prudence disappear by stage 6 and benevolence and justice do not become genuine moral principles (as opposed to virtue descriptions) until stages 5 and 6.

According to Kohlberg, school pupils are either pre-conventional or conventional in their moral judgements, with stage 4 thinking expected from some but not all school-leavers. If this is the case, and post-conventional thinking cannot be expected from school pupils, it may be appropriate to suggest that NCC's (1993) list of school values should only contain social conventional notions of good and right behaviour such as truth-telling, promise-keeping, and respecting other people's rights and property. (See later in this chapter)

## **Critiques of Kohlberg's theory**

Criticisms of Kohlberg's theory which I consider significant and relevant to this thesis fall into three broad areas: methodology and analysis of data, the use of justice as the over-riding principle and the theory's general applicability.

### ***Methodology***

With regard to methodology and analysis, the following five criticisms need raising. First, Kohlberg says that he views 'cognition' and 'affect' as "different aspects of, or perspectives on, the same mental events" (1980a, p 40) so that, for example, the same kind of anxiety felt by two children at different stages who are planning to steal something may be differently interpreted as 'being chicken' (stage 2) or the warning of conscience (stage 4). However I think this explanation is a weak attempt to mask the focus on cognition at the expense of affect which Fowler (1981) also deplores and that, because of this focus on cognition, a second criticism becomes clearer, namely that respondents with good linguistic skills are advantaged by the exclusive use of verbal reasoning to assess such thinking (Gates, 1986). It is interesting to note that Hirst (1993), who once endorsed such a cognitive approach as Kohlberg's, now places greater emphasis on action and experience in the practice of morality. Hirst's reflection over time on the balance between cognition and behaviour - and perhaps affect - may indicate that OFSTED and NCC, similarly, need to reassess the weight they give to these components.

Third, Kohlberg (1984, p 340, *my italics*) justifies the exclusion of girls from his original 1950s sample as a decision "not to add the *complicating* issue of sex differences" to his work. Forty years later this explanation is unacceptable. Because of this, I believe that Gilligan (1982) is right to consider that his theory is gender blind since the thinking of many women is often scored at stage 3 (which may be the result of social and cultural conventions but that is not the point) making their 'progress' to higher stages difficult because at stage 4 they must

subordinate relationships to rules and, at stages 5 and 6, subordinate rules to universal principles of justice. Gilligan suggests that men and women - perhaps influenced by those same socio-cultural norms - often have different senses of their being in the world, with men founding their identity on their *separateness from* other people and women on their *closeness to* them. I think this distinction has particular relevance to a study of bereavement in which the loss of a relationship is patently evident.

Fourth, there is validity in the complaint that likening moral decision-making to game-playing fails to recognize that a game is usually played voluntarily for recreation or amusement, with the focus often on winning rather than merely participating, and that each game has its own particular rules. Gilligan (1982) notes that traditional young girls' games such as hopscotch and skipping involve turn-taking - with less need for arbitration over rule disputes than in traditional young boys' games of marbles - and that, among girls, the continuation of a game is often subordinated to the continuation of a friendship. Overall, I think that comparing adult moral judgements to children's game-playing judgements fails to recognize the complexity of adult moral decision making (see also chapter 4).

Finally and ironically, Kohlberg seems to commit the naturalistic fallacy he claims to avoid (1971) by drawing philosophical conclusions from empirical research and declaring that higher stages are only claims for the greater adequacy of forms of thinking, not of individual moral worth. He first says there is a logical "requirement that a higher moral stage be a philosophically more adequate way of reasoning about moral dilemmas than a lower stage" (1984, p 194) and then asserts that

anyone who interviewed children about moral dilemmas and who followed them longitudinally in time would come to our six stages and no others (1984, p 195).

These statements once led him to conclude that morally right preferences can logically be derived from a natural order of things, although he later disclaimed the moral superiority of later stages over earlier ones suggesting that "personal

endorsement of the philosophical adequacy claims of higher stages is a matter of choice" (1984, p 276). However, the links between cognitive development and age imply that reasoning improves with maturity, and since his examples of thinking at higher stages include Martin Luther King there can be little doubt that 'higher' is also deemed to be 'better'.

### ***Justice***

Regarding the over-riding use of the principle of justice it is necessary, first, to recognize that the rating of social justice as morally more adequate than any other moral consideration is actually a theological and philosophical value position (Richards and Davison, 1992) which, even if supported by Judaic and Islamic thinking (Smith, 1986), does not necessarily prove justice to be paramount. Waterman (1988, p 292) notes that "each psychologist starts his or her analysis from different assumptions about what constitutes morality" and Kohlberg may be unwittingly reflecting the dominant Judaeo-Christian thinking of his culture.

Second is the observation that "if everyone were to respond wholeheartedly to the need for care and love, justice would be unnecessary" (Moran, 1987, p 80) because the need to settle disputes mostly arises when inter-personal relationships fail. Although this is a criticism based upon an ideal which it may be impossible to live up to, it is useful to recognize that justice is often used as the ultimate arbitrator in order to settle, in impersonal, legalistic ways, matters which really require personal involvement and commitment. A third objection, arising from the first, is that the linking of justice with the notion of individual rights has encouraged "individualistic, rationalistic, and male biases in modern traditions" (Moran, 1987, p 81) so that moral ideals such as patriotism and loyalty have become reified. Although this is a criticism of the outcomes of justice rather than of Kohlberg's theory per se, since justice is the theory's *raison d'être*, it is possible to argue that ignoble as well as noble attitudes and behaviour may be encouraged by Kohlberg's theory.

Finally, as Dunlop (1981) observes, many people would claim that they make moral decisions based on their general allegiance to 'the good as a whole' rather than to certain of its essential manifestations such as the principle of justice or character traits of loving-kindness and conscientiousness. Although such ways of thinking may incorporate notions of justice, they are not solely driven by it and justice may be only one of several ways of thinking morally. In fact, moral concepts of benevolence, compassion, duty, honour, liberty and self-realization are neither explored nor acknowledged within Kohlberg's theory (Richards and Davison, 1992).

### ***Application of the theory***

Kohlberg (1984) accepts that, because of its original focus on young males, the theory may have limited application to adult life (Moran, 1987; Kitwood, 1990) but he does not acknowledge the impact of society's rules and expectations governing what children, young people or adults are permitted to do (Harré, 1986). I think that a theory exploring the development of individual understanding of rules, consequences and duties should not ignore the ways in which the social context both encourages and restricts the growth of such understanding.

Second, Gilligan et al (1990) argue that in real-life dilemmas adults find the voices of justice and care in complex dialogues as they increasingly recognize that a focus on justice alone can blind to relationship issues (see also chapter 4). Caring, compassion and empathy are active forms of benevolence - requiring time, energy and sometimes material cost - while not bullying, injuring or imposing one's will upon another person are negative forms, taking little time or energy and making few demands. In this respect caring may be more strenuous than justice since the latter could, on occasions, choose non-involvement in an attempt at impartiality.

Third, I agree with Gilligan (1982) that there is a need to move on discussions of moral development from cognitive reasoning about the principles of justice to

recognizing that care, responsibility, relationships and compassion are involved in living morally. However, Kohlberg (1984) asserts that, in this respect, her sense of 'moral' is different to his. His sense includes impartiality, universalizability and the willingness to come to an agreement while Gilligan's implies concern, responsibility and a willingness to communicate. Most people, he suggests, define the spheres of kinship, love, friendship and sex - particularly divorce and marriage - as personal decisions to be made rather than moral issues to be resolved. Her dilemmas, he argues, deal with "special obligations to family and friends" (p 231) and his do not. I think, therefore, that Kohlberg would not consider the real-life situation of responding to the death of a significant person to be a moral dilemma because (a) it involves inter-personal relationships and (b) issues of equity, equality and reciprocity are absent as one of the people to be considered (the deceased) cannot take part.

### **Virtues, vices and social convention**

Kuhmerker (1975) separates a person's capacity to feel, reason and respond into the development of empathy, moral reasoning and problem-solving strategies. Since role-taking involves problem-solving as well as empathy, she suggests it may be both the link between these two processes as well as its common social manifestation. Hoffman (1979) also sees empathy as a vicarious affective response to others and a source of moral motivation. Carr (1991) offers a four-fold classification of virtues but recognises that it is impossible "merely by reference to the name of a virtue" (p 197) to assign it to a particular category, since, for example, courage may be either self-denying or not self-denying depending on the circumstances.

Kohlberg, however, describes character traits such as honesty, service and self-control as "a bag of virtues" (1980a, p 77) since he considers that virtues and vices are merely labels used by people to award praise or blame to others and are often not the way in which the labellers themselves think when making moral

decisions. This 'bag of virtues' approach, Kohlberg suggests, assumes that a virtue exists for every rule (eg: 'honesty' for rules of cheating and stealing). According to his theory, vices and virtues are only important at the conventional level (stages 3 and 4) where praise or blame enable identification of what is considered right and good. At the preconventional level (stages 1 and 2), they have no significance because intention is not important and, at the principled level, 'being honest' is less significant than action which creates a moral state of affairs. Turiel (1983) also distinguishes between convention and morality, describing 'convention' as arbitrary action which is relative to social contexts, such as family, school and peer groups, whereby children construct ideas about and recognize the expectations of the social world they live in (eg: dressing appropriately, being polite). 'Morality' refers to prescriptive judgements of welfare, rights and justice which are neither relative to nor defined by social contexts, and describe how people ought to relate to each other (eg: not bullying or doing harm to others).

These distinctions may assist in clarifying the values that NCC (1993, p 4) says schools should include or reject. The document lists "moral absolutes" as:

- telling the truth
- keeping promises
- respecting the rights and property of others
- acting considerately towards others
- helping those less fortunate and weaker than oneself
- taking personal responsibility for one's actions
- self-discipline.

The document says that "school values should reject: bullying, cheating, deceit, cruelty, irresponsibility" and "dishonesty."

Since these values are prescribed for the whole pupil age range some of the apparent ambiguities mentioned below may be due to writing a document aimed at both 5 and 18 year olds. For younger pupils acquiring and displaying such

moral behaviour may be likened to an initiation into useful habits (Peters, 1963), while for older pupils it should involve practical role-taking, increased autonomy and opportunities to experience conflict between relativism and absolutism in morality (Perry, 1970). The implementation of Hirst's (1974) suggestion, that the over-all framework of authority in school must provide firm external control at one end and opportunities for autonomy at the other, may explain some of the difficulties experienced by pupils transferring from primary to secondary schools because they usually move from an atmosphere of autonomy in a small school where they are the seniors to firm control in a large school where they become the juniors again and are treated as such. Overall the NCC document seems to aim for the achievement of stage 4 by the age of 16 which, as I shall <sup>show</sup> later, also conforms with Kohlberg's (1980b) own aims for the same age group.

However, the 'moral absolutes' and preferred behaviour in the NCC document involve differing issues in definitions of morality. Truth-telling and promise-keeping may be seen as virtues, or as examples of prescribed types of behaviour within deontological theory, or as significant according to the outcome that they promote from a consequential viewpoint. In any case they depend on specific situations for validity because to refrain from telling the truth or keeping a promise may sometimes avoid embarrassment and pain or even give pleasure to those involved. They are therefore only *prima facie* obligatory and may be over-ridden by another moral rule with a higher priority. Acting considerately towards others and helping those less fortunate and weaker than oneself are virtues of character which advocate good or right behaviour without describing its content. While 'acting considerately' may be an example of active benevolence, if prescribed (as in this document) it may become more a matter of appropriate behaviour without any commitment to an ideal or feeling towards the person concerned. Self-discipline could be a character trait requiring constant vigilance but, since it relies on internal interpretation, one person may perceive it to be a mere social convention (not to be late for lessons) while another may regard it as a binding

religious obligation (to fast through Lent/Ramadan). Neither examples are moral absolutes in the same sense as the categorical imperative.

Although respect for people's rights and property are both principles, property-respect implies negative benevolence (not stealing or breaking something) while respect for a person's rights is ambiguous. Although it implies Kohlberg's stage 6 perspective of equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings, it may mean avoiding conflict rather than furthering their well-being. Taking responsibility for one's actions reflects, likewise, Kohlberg's stage 6 perspective and is active self-appraisal. Finally, the vices (bullying, cheating, deceit, cruelty, irresponsibility and dishonesty) describe negative duties regarding behaviour although they seem to express a range of values such as respect for rules, authority, trust, contract, people - and perhaps animals.

This list of virtues and principles recognizes the humanity of everyone we meet in prescribing respect and courtesies due or owed to them but it is not a coherent scheme of moral development. By focusing on *behaviour* to adopt or avoid - which may seem necessary because, in practice, this is usually what causes offence - the concepts and *beliefs* that pupils hold and their *feelings* and reasons for holding them are overshadowed. While it is certainly easier to control pupils' behaviour than their feelings and thoughts, if the emphasis remains only on behaviour the broader principle of education will be lost. Happily The Framework for Inspection of Schools (OFSTED, 1994b, p 86), although ambiguous elsewhere, seems to recognize this difficulty in its amplification of evaluation criteria:

Moral development is concerned with pupils' ability to make judgements about how to behave and act and the reasons for such behaviour. It requires knowledge and understanding and includes questions of intention, motive and attitude.

## **The role of schools in moral development: moral atmosphere and individual development**

Most teachers are not fully aware that they must deal with issues of moral education, that they have no clear views on the subject, and that they have never had any training or education in it. (Kohlberg, 1980a, p 18)

Kohlberg (1980b) sees schools as agents of social change because they are intermediaries, as stage 4 or 5 societies, between the family and society. Although they resemble families in their personal focus, schools are also complex, rule-governed and democratic, like society and government. They are really impersonal organizations stressing competition and achievement, teaching respect for general and impartial rules and encouraging the pursuit of collective goals. Schools also offer an opportunity to learn the language, symbols and information not so easily encountered elsewhere that are necessary for an understanding of objects, ideas, situations, hypothetical dilemmas, laws, customs, and socio-cultural knowledge. In 1980 Kohlberg expressed a retrenchment to stage 4 goals as the end of American civic education since he believed that unless people leave high school (aged 17) with the interests and motivations of stage 4 present, they are unlikely to undertake positions of participation and public responsibility later in life. What schools and schooling offer is intentional intervention by certain adults in the lives of children and young people in order to promote and encourage certain skills, knowledge and behaviour.

The hidden curriculum of a school often indicates its 'moral atmosphere' (Kohlberg, 1986) which includes its governing moral norms and its sense of solidarity, care or community. A positive moral atmosphere which provides pupils with conditions for discussion, consideration of other people's viewpoints, a sense of power and participation in making rules and the feeling that existing rules are fair can have a significant effect on determining moral behaviour (Kohlberg, 1984). However, little congruity exists in many schools between teacher and pupil norms on, for example, such issues as cheating. Pupils often hold counter-norms which are unacknowledged - although implicitly supported by teachers - and

perceive these to be the natural consequences of teacher emphasis on competitive achievement. Since at stages 5 and 6 people recognize that cheating breaks the social contract and that justice requires that everyone should be allowed to cheat if one person can do so, Kohlberg (1980a) suggests that it should not be treated as a genuine moral issue among young children until they have developed their own values on the matter.

Teachers who are conventional in their moral reasoning (stages 3 and 4) often focus on conforming behaviour in children and use virtues to describe social conventions (being clean, polite or tidy) which are not moral issues. Since Kohlberg argues that the precondition for moral conflict is the human capacity for role-taking or being empathic, most social situations are not moral ones "because there is no conflict in role-taking between the expectations of one person and another" (1980a, p 49). I endorse this view and believe that pupils' sense of moral value will be demeaned if teachers force them into behavioural conformity (wearing school uniform) while failing to show moral concern for matters of personal importance (death of a pet) or events in society (local bank raid).

Most schools do not encourage equal liberty and consent of the governed (Kohlberg, 1980b) but rather expect academic competition and rule conformity. Kohlberg advocates a 'just community' (1986) alternative school to counter this whereby, through role-taking, pupils have responsible social participation in the running of their institutions. Since it has been found that pupils with extensive peer-group participation advance more quickly through Kohlberg's moral stages than do those who are isolated from such activities (1980a), this approach could encourage moral development. The social isolation that many schools encourage, often by omission because of their protectiveness and cultural selectivity (Hirst, 1974), could be addressed through pupil role-taking and involvement in the local and national community.

Gardner, Hendrick, Hamlyn and Piaget have already acknowledged (see chapter 1) that there is a distinction to be made between unguided experience and guided transmission of knowledge, between the accomplishments of pre-school years and out-of-school experience and formal school work. In the case of secondary school pupils, for example, attendance at school (without considering holidays) may involve 35 out of 168 hours in a week and if 56 hours on average are spent in sleep, 77 hours are still available for other 'learning' activities involving family, friends, peer and social groups, books, magazines, newspapers, television, films, videos, games and sport, hobbies, travel, youth clubs, discos and places of worship. Many social conventions of etiquette, table manners and appropriate dress are unconsciously learnt at home or elsewhere by observation of role models and, even if such conventions are affected by teachers who according to NCC (1993, p 8) "imply values by the way they ... dress, [and] the language they use," since these are arbitrary rather than prescribed morality, they should not be considered important examples of moral development.

Moran (1987, p 11) argues that we need a clear distinction between schooling and education "otherwise the schoolteacher is asked to carry an impossible burden of moral education" and Kohlberg (1980b) even suggests that the ability of educators to promote participation on moral issues depends upon them reaching a principled level of moral judgement themselves (stage 5). Although Moran is referring to American schooling, his critique also holds true for the British educational system since schools - and teachers by implication - are usually blamed when young people fail to meet certain standards in employment or moral behaviour - as if parents (to name the most apparent influence in a young person's life) have no input at all.

The move by government to have OFSTED inspect the moral and spiritual development of pupils reflects an optimistic view that schools can significantly 'promote' this kind of development. Moran (1987, p 11) observes that "other kinds of teaching, such as parental teaching or job apprenticing or friendly counsel,

must ... be judged as strange or lesser forms of teaching" in comparison with schooling although "teaching is something every human being can do for another." OFSTED (1994c, 6) records educators' recognition of the balance between school and non-school influences and states that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development "is influenced by the home and wider society, both of which could negate all the good that a school does." It also suggests that schools might get credit for what they had not done as well as "get little credit for having achieved a great deal," and Tritter's (1992) conclusion that religious schools produce students with stronger and more uniform attitudes towards religion and morality than non-religious schools, is significant in this respect.

### **Provision for moral and spiritual development in schools**

Inspecting the provision that schools make for the promotion of moral development of pupils places a burden upon teachers that no other profession faces. OFSTED (1994c, 9) notes that:

a society which is overly critical of teachers ... cannot then expect those same teachers and their schools to exert huge influence over behaviour and morality.

Since it is evident that schools (buildings or institutions) cannot teach people, it must be teachers (people) that do so, whether individually or jointly, and through both the visible and the hidden curriculum. Not even parents are inspected regarding how they promote the moral and spiritual development of their children, and neither are religious institutions nor places of worship. The two related assumptions are (a) that schooling is about moral development and (b) that teachers (as adults in charge of children) can reasonably be expected to teach - or promote - the development of pupils at school, whether through acts of collective worship, pastoral care, Religious Education or the ethos of the school. Their provision of such experiences are then, by implication, assessed as 'better' or 'worse' than some other standard by colleagues, parents and OFSTED inspectors.

Forms of assessment reflect several of the ways of viewing development discussed in chapter one. Evaluative assessment, by considering the extent to which learning opportunities are effective, focuses on the *process* of development as well as its content. Formative assessment, by viewing the achievement made so far with a view to encouraging further learning, focuses on the *present* situation in the light of the (recent) past. Diagnostic assessment, through examining exactly what has or has not been learned, focuses on *specific* details of development such as whether or not certain intellectual learning has occurred and generally pays less attention to physical development (as this is considered to constitute maturation) or emotional development - except in the context of discussions of morality where, for example, feelings of guilt or responsibility may be expected. Summative assessment, which considers overall achievement at the end of a period of time, focuses on the *end-state* of development.

Furthermore, development may be assessed according to criteria set for everyone (which is how religious theories view moral development) or according to the norm reached by most people (which is in line with psychological and social thinking). Criteria assessment may be seen as having higher standards than norm assessment since an ideal, rather than reality, is described. In matters of moral development teachers are often caught in a dilemma of expecting criteria-set standards (keeping promises, telling the truth, respecting people and property) while acknowledging the normal standards that people, including pupils, regularly display.

## **Moral development of teachers, pupils and society**

... no teacher trained in any established academic discipline, and skilled in teaching it, is thereby knowledgeable about either the nature of moral problems and their solution or the best ways of carrying out moral education.  
(Hirst, 1974, p 112)

Teachers' own moral development is not, of course, measured or assessed since, like the assessment of pupils' moral development, this would be considered "intrusive" (NCC, 1993, p 9). However the assumption that teachers can 'promote' moral development in their pupils - either because they are older, wiser or better educated - seems to imply that moral development is a natural thing which, given 'normal and suitable conditions' will flourish (see chapter 1). There is a conflict of attitude here, then, not often recognized. If schools (and of course by this we mean teachers) are considered to be merely providing the right or natural conditions to promote moral development, there cannot be any dispute whether those conditions are 'better' or 'worse' because what is 'natural' cannot also be assessed as 'better' than another.

If teachers do not need to be assessed for their standard of moral development, it must be because their standard is tacitly deemed acceptable for promoting development in those younger than themselves. This assumption probably derives from the traditional model prevailing in most areas of the curriculum whereby knowledge is transmitted from the 'knowledgeable' (the teacher) to the 'unknowledgeable' (pupils). However, this model does not work so well regarding personal behaviour and moral attitudes because teachers and pupils probably have different notions of goals in life and acceptable risk (Leaman, 1995). Teachers mainly aspire to middle class attitudes - at least with regard to delaying gratification and planning for the future because that is what their job is concerned with - while pupils struggle with concepts of who they will become and how they will become employed in a society (and world) in which previously held markers of apprenticeship, employment and status are no longer reliable. Pupils can often distinguish between areas of knowledge in which teachers are experts and those

in which they are not, and while liking and respecting them, they recognise that teachers are not specialists in moral attitudes and behaviour - merely holders of *opinions* which are not absolute (Leaman, 1995).

The present government would be well-advised to take note of this. It would not then insist that teachers seek to reinforce conventional morality as part of the traditional curriculum as though it were just another subject which could be taught ... in the same way as the subjects in the National Curriculum.  
(Leaman, p 46)

Following on from this, we must ask whether the standards of behaviour described in government documents (truth-telling, keeping promises) are criteria or norm descriptions for both - or either? - private and public behaviour. Do all people, particularly adults, habitually behave in these ways or are they ideals that government (and other authority figures) would have all members of society aspire to since, it should be noted, ERA (1988, my italics) refers to education that promotes the development of "pupils at the school *and of society*"?

### **Moral values in the school setting**

... it is no straightforward factual statement to say of someone that he or she is immature or undeveloped ... morally. It may, though it need not necessarily do so, be a way of signifying a lack of conformity with socially accepted standards.  
(Hamlyn, 1975, pp 36-7)

Although there is a distinction between social convention and morality, it is not always apparent in the way teachers and pupils talk and behave. While ways of eating, speaking and dressing and of treating classmates may all be termed 'bad' or 'wrong' by a teacher, there is a great difference between eating with one's mouth open and causing another person sorrow or harm. Even when behaviour such as bullying is correctly identified as not moral, there is a hesitancy to name a pupil (or adult) as immoral or morally immature since, in other areas of life, he or she may behave according to different (and better) standards.

It is obvious that *all* teachers at *all* times do not tell the truth or keep their promises: it is an impossible expectation. End of term reports often use

educational euphemisms ("could do better") to obscure the reality of lack of progress in diagnostic terms and methods of 'maintaining order' or 'discipline' in classrooms may involve sarcasm, threats or punishment which do not respect people or keep promises. Furthermore, within teaching, the unnatural ratio of one adult to an average of thirty young people also implicitly conveys a moral message of superiority-inferiority: the thirty must obey the one; the teacher-adult knows more-better than pupils-children. Even in class discussions ostensibly designed to enable young people to give their opinions, teachers may be more concerned with encouraging everyone to speak than with addressing any of the points raised. This may give pupils the impression that their opinions are not worthwhile or important (Leaman, 1995).

Since school attendance is not voluntary for pupils between 5 and 16, they must, morally speaking, be attending by force a place which purports to care for their (mostly future) welfare and good by reinforcing (in the ongoing present) concepts of hierarchy and power. For example, a successful or good teacher can never, by popular definition, be one who cannot 'keep control' although she or he may know certain subjects thoroughly and have a care and concern for young people. Thus, teaching reveals itself to be implicitly about 'keeping order' by maintaining a hierarchy of adult power over children and young people which must convey moral values. Schools are institutions that ostensibly provide trained young people for junior employment roles in society but they are slow to change in response to social trends, and society mainly expects its schools to produce young people who respect authority and abide by existing codes of public morality - not ones who question and challenge the status quo.

In reviewing its approach to the inspection of the provision for moral development, OFSTED (1994c, 3) admits that it is aware of research such as Kohlberg's but believes:

... there is no workable basis for a hierarchy in the evaluation of attitudes and values and that relatively little is known about how children learn and develop values, attitudes and personal qualities. This lack of knowledge gives greater

credibility to the present pragmatic approach in which inspection and dialogue are used as a basis for going forward.

In Britain any need for such a theory as Kohlberg's may be disputed since the segregation of religion and ethics in American schools - which probably helped to rationalize Kohlberg's theory of moral development - does not exist. However, educators frequently use classroom discussion of ethics in subjects such as RE, English literature, history and science to promote the kind of cognitive conflict that Kohlberg believes promotes movement to higher stages by improving justice-focused reasoning. Furthermore, even a very general acceptance of the existence of stages of justice reasoning means we must re-evaluate the role of teachers in the moral development of their pupils since Kohlberg's studies reveal that, on average, longitudinal subjects take more than five years to move one stage, and that many adults do not reach the highest levels of moral judgement and even 'stay' at stages 2 or 3 (Rest, 1979). It seems unreasonable, therefore, to expect teachers to promote 'higher' forms of moral reasoning, feeling or behaviour in children and young people which they have not reached themselves.

This difficulty may be even greater when pupils encounter an experience which teachers have yet to go through, such as the death of a parent or sibling - and Kohlberg's stage 7 hints at the magnitude of this kind of experience. However, the perceived need to hide one's feelings within the teaching profession in order to cope with the pace and stress of the work often prevents teachers from being as helpful as they can when death occurs - particularly through disaster or crisis (Leaman, 1995).

Bereaved people are likely to think about the cause and effect of death, to attribute meaning to such events and to respond to the emotional challenge of bereavement with altered (although usually temporary) behaviour (Parkes, 1987; Worden, 1991). A child of ten may have thought more about the meaning of death and the feelings aroused by it than an adult of forty. In wishing its parent were still alive, a pupil may come to value life and the enjoyment of people's

company more than keeping social conventional rules (eg: wearing school uniform). When death occurs to their peers, young people may even revise their notions of acceptable risk in life, since in the case of traffic accidents particularly, safety rules and taking care may have proved useless.

Having a changed perspective on the frailty of life may provoke in a teenager a reaction against the apparent meaningless of education which requires eleven years to be devoted to scholastic study with the stated aim of improving adult employment prospects since the event of death is so unpredictable. Feeling angry, confused, depressed, guilty, lonely or sad and not knowing how long these feelings will last, or realizing they recur at anniversaries or certain times of the year, may make it difficult for a pupil to do schoolwork, study for exams or respond in socially appropriate ways to peers and teachers. And whether or not peers and teachers talk about any event which causes a pupil distress is itself a covert moral decision. Since sensitivity may be fostered by exposure to normal experiences such as bereavement, many educators and counsellors recognize that it is undesirable to shield children and young people from emotional situations - although, of course, it is impossible to force teachers to talk about traumatic events that affect pupils, even if they were present themselves (eg: Hillsborough football disaster).

The essence of Kohlberg's theory of moral development is that an appreciation of moral principles such as the value of life ultimately prevails over all other values and that dissatisfaction with the adequacy of one stage initiates movement to a higher one. While not endorsing Kohlberg's (1984) 'hard' stage analysis (see chapter 4) and recognizing the very real criticism of a model based, initially, upon the thinking of males and its stress on justice rather than care in relationships (Gilligan, 1982), I believe that more refined, complex and internalized thinking is a feature of moral maturity, often described as the "superficial-to-profound progression" (Gibbs, 1991, p 91). I suggest that the experience of bereavement for a child or young person can be one source of the cognitive conflict which

Kohlberg espouses as central to moral development, and that this dissonance occurs when the death itself and/or the ensuing feelings are explained or perceived in terms which challenge current levels of reasoning.

I propose the following forms of thinking, feeling and behaving as indicative of individual moral development related to death and bereavement, whether in or out of school.

- Moving beyond socio-conventional beliefs concerning one's own and other people's morality. Acting in ways that are moral but not necessarily conventional; not only refraining from harm but also being actively benevolent and taking time and effort to help others.
- Recognizing that some values (eg: keeping promises) may be situation specific while others (eg: respecting living things) are not.
- Asking not only 'What should I do?' but also 'What sort of person should I be?'; realizing that not only actions but beliefs, intentions, feelings and qualities of character also constitute morality. Developing and holding to one's own ideas of 'right' and 'good' even if they are unconventional (eg: euthanasia).
- Questioning the moral values of religious traditions, including one's own, in order to clarify the links between moral thinking, feeling and action and belief in a divine power, and beliefs and practices of institutional religion (eg: heaven, judgement).
- Understanding and/or reconciling conflicts in moral situations between the principles of justice and care, and the variance in one's own life between broadly held beliefs and concepts and situation-specific action.
- Balancing the personal perspective (own feelings, beliefs and actions, personal qualities) with the inter-personal, social and global one; seeing oneself in a broader context and responding to this bigger picture.

In Part Two I shall explore how far these forms are apparent in any of my respondents.

## **CHAPTER THREE: SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Introduction**

This chapter continues to explore human development from the perspective described as 'spiritual'. I compare well-established and specifically religious meanings of the concept 'spirituality' with more recent psychological ones, and note that spirituality has long been seen as both the essence of humanity and the motive for its action. The particular thinking of Christianity regarding the event of death and some commonalities between religious-spiritual and bereavement experiences are suggested, and four interlinked concepts of 'spirituality' are outlined and then further explored within a model of three elements related to school life.

The chapter reinforces the recognition already made in chapter two that although schools can promote spirituality (and morality) as fundamental self-exploration through the arts, attitudes to work and life, and practical activities to help other people, unexpected life experiences of illness and bereavement may be more devastating and enduring means of spiritual and moral development for some pupils.

### **Development of concepts of spirit in religion, history, psychology and education**

Spirituality, as an area of study, must be capable of definition. If it has no conceptual limits, effectively it means nothing. ... a cursory glance at the different kinds of writing which appear under the label 'spirituality', whether popular or more scholarly, reveals that it may cover history, psychology and theology as well as devotional works. It appears that spirituality is one of those subjects whose meaning everyone claims to know until they have to define it. (Sheldrake, 1991, p 32)

It is difficult to exactly capture the sense or meaning of concepts used in previous centuries - whether or not the word is the same today or can be easily translated - since ideas are shaped in response to events of the time and language changes

in response to new ideas. Today it may be difficult to understand the beliefs and ideas of people of previous eras because of such things as different perspectives on community-individual life and views about the world and the place of men and women in it. In addition, we cannot know how far the concept we think we have understood and assigned to a particular time and place was firmly established or still evolving then. Although naming concepts and dating events enables writers to impose an order on the past, things cannot have been seen in the same way by people of the time and I have been more aware of these difficulties when discussing the development of ideas about spirituality than about morality.

One particular difficulty lies in the fact that morality is more readily identified through forms of behaviour while spirituality is concerned with exploring the inner nature and resources of a human being and their potential or actual relationship to other or higher forms and forces. This nature and these resources have the ability to transcend, reflect, reason, imagine, empathise and plan, and such abilities have enabled individuals to think about the cause and purpose of all being including their own lives, the significance of certain experiences, places and events, their relationship with all other life forms and the purpose and meaning of living, suffering and death. Many of these forms of reflection have evolved within philosophy and religion and, within western thinking, Christianity has had a dominant influence upon the development of the concept and use of the word 'spiritual.'

Despite these difficulties, having a sense of how notions of spirituality have developed enables us to understand the complexity of the word today and to see that our present thinking is part of an ongoing re-definition of the concept. Recent analysis of British uses of the word 'spirituality' (Hull, 1993) shows that the term is no longer exclusively associated with religion. In Hull's sample of 252 written examples on 3rd August 1993 the greatest number (about 111) are contained within definitions that reflect a psychological perspective and the next greatest (about 84) have a religious association.

- **Psychological:** quality of an individual or an aspect of personality; way of perceiving nature and life; characteristic of a tribe, people or nation; intuitive or mysterious.
- **Religious:** characteristic of a particular theological emphasis within Christianity; a particular sect or movement; equivalent to religion or the essence of religion; contrary to secular; linked with morality; private or inward; out of the ordinary, not mundane, unworldly, not materialistic or physical; linked or contrasted with sexuality; transcendent; related to or different from the occult, witchcraft and astrology.

These perspectives are two of six I have compiled from the 19 categories Hull creates and the other four, in decreasing size, are:

- **Social** (a trend in society or culture)
- **Artistic** (art, music, literature; vitality, vivacity and creativity)
- **Secular** (of this world, political)
- **Unusual** (luxury, spicy, exotic).

Within education, also, a similar redefining of the word 'spiritual' is evident today. Whether or not the Education Act of 1944 used the term 'spiritual' to carefully indicate the priorities that should pervade the whole educational process or simply to avoid dissension (Priestley, 1985b), its use became established in The Newsom Report (1963) and Curriculum: 11-16 (1977) before reiteration in ERA (1988). Although the verbs 'contribute' (1944) and 'introduce' (1977) seemed to indicate that, along with other areas, education assists in - but does not wholly provide for - spiritual development, ERA (1988) adopted a different view by using 'promote,' a more specific verb, to describe the perceived role of the curriculum in this developmental process. This change may be because the demise of traditional (Christian) religion in Britain has left education as the main or only common form of communication of values and ideas experienced by the pupils

who will be tomorrow's adult citizens. In this way education has been elevated as the promoter of spiritual development in order to undertake what religious institutions were once deemed to do and, later in this chapter, I shall consider how far education is able to promote this form of development for all its pupils.

Within Hull's (1993) analysis two trends emerge regarding contemporary usage of the term 'spiritual': the ongoing traditional link with some aspect of religion, whether Christianity or not, and a growing tendency to link 'spiritual' with 'human' in the broadest sense, expressed through such forms as relationships and creativity. The first trend, making up 50 of Hull's examples, is consistent with philosophical-religious perspectives while the second trend, containing more than half the total number, is in line with more recent psychosocial views of spirituality as synonymous with human characteristics and personality, or the intrinsic quality or essence of an individual. This broader picture of spirituality and spiritual development seems to be reflected in NCC's claim that:

The term [spiritual development] needs to be seen as applying to something fundamental in the human condition which is not necessarily experienced through the physical senses and/or expressed through everyday language. It has to do with relationships with other people and, for believers, with God. (1993, p 2)

Such a description moves beyond the two views expressed in Curriculum: 11-16 (1977, p ii) that spirituality is concerned with "the awareness a person has of those elements in existence and experience which may be defined in terms of inner feelings and beliefs" and/or "with everything in human knowledge or experience that is connected with or derives from a sense of God or Gods." Not only does NCC (1993, p 2) suggest that spiritual development applies to "something fundamental in the human condition" - whether or not this is divinely inspired and controlled - but it enlarges the description to include "relationships with other people" which, as I shall show below, has always been a hallmark of both morality and spirituality.

In response to the suggestion that spirituality is mainly concerned with the 'inwardness' of a person, Thatcher (1991) declares that "children who learn that to be religious is to draw into themselves have been sold a profound misunderstanding" (p 25) because spirituality is really about the "between-ness of persons" (1993, p 215). Hull (1996, p 43) also believes spirituality is evident when "people are inspired to live for others." (See later in this chapter for further discussion of this issue.) However, the NCC document acknowledges that for believers spirituality is mainly concerned with the age-old concept of a relationship with, and response to, God.

### **Religion: theories of dualism, teleology and social conceptualizations of experiences**

Debates about the cause and direction of human development have particularly encouraged religious views of human nature as internally divided. Since everyday realities of cruelty, suffering and hardship challenge the belief that God or a divine power both creates and directs the development of humanity, explanations to account for this have tended to view our perfect potential as thwarted by one weak part - whether the body, mind or emotions - and monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam have long represented a particular form of nurture that can overcome these natural defects. Consequently, it has been easy to view a growing awareness of imperfection or the formal entry into a particular religion as representing the beginning of a new life and to see continuing in this 'new' or 'other' way as steps or stages of progress. Thus, debates regarding nature-nurture and continuity-discontinuity have also developed within general spiritual discourse and, within Christianity, there have also been ongoing attempts to resolve theories of dualism and teleology originating within Platonism and Aristotelianism.

Ideas that a mystical union can be achieved by renouncing everyday affairs and activities and denying or punishing the body probably derive from Platonic belief in

the illusory nature of this world and the permanent nature of the word of forms and ideas. Judaeo-Christian views of humanity as 'fallen' have enhanced the idea that, until freed by death, the spirit arbitrates between the mind's desire to contemplate these forms and the body's desire to remain rooted in physical affairs. St Paul's distinction between the 'spiritual person' whose mind, will, thoughts and body are under the influence of the Spirit of God and the 'natural person' who is not - although originally delineating two attitudes to life or two ways of living - also helped to formulate a belief that the abstract spirit is separate from other things such as the body, the mind, material things and worldly affairs.

Aristotle, however, reasoned that the natural world is the real one, constructed in such a way that all the objects in it move or change in a purposeful, teleological pattern. Many of the theories of development mentioned in chapter one derive from his argument that acorns always grow in to oak trees and children into adults - never into anything else - because such growth is towards predictable, normative results. Even apparent contradictions are examples of a more general thesis of purposefulness pervading natural events, whereby failure to develop as expected is due to unnatural interference (damage, illness or death). Contemporary psychological understanding of the soul in teleological terms of function and purpose is evident in this thinking, with the essential quality (or spirit) of a person described in 'this-world' rather than Platonic 'other-world' terms.

In addition to providing a conceptual framework for the resolution of such debates, religion can also be seen as a form of social conceptualization of individual experiences. Orthodox religious beliefs have been formulated to understand and explain as 'religious' the various experiences of life, as well as to give expression to common human needs for love, security, affirmation and sharing (Bradford, 1995). Such feelings and experiences, which have been termed pre-personal religion by Elkind (1971), are believed by Hardy (1979) to have developed through natural selection in biological evolution because of their useful survival value for individuals. Some of these experiences such as feeling somebody or something

near at times of sorrow, stress or despair often occur after the death of a loved one, although they have not always been accepted as orthodox within traditional Christianity (Hay, 1987).

In the next sections I will explore how some parts of society - and contemporary educational documents in particular - have come to describe a term that originally had only religious and theological meanings in ways that are also generic, secular and psychological. In addition I hope to uncover the fundamental links between spirituality and death and to explore the significance of beliefs, feelings and experiences about death for spiritual development.

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVES WITHIN RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES OF SPIRITUALITY**

It is indisputable that orthodox Christianity in Britain has suffered a decline in popularity (Davie, 1994), but while some see this as fatal to the morality and spirituality of the nation, others perceive it to be indicative of rethinking and responding to present needs. In Britain today people are more aware than ever before of the global religious heritage existing outside as well as within Christianity as information about people of other races and religions pervades and influences such things as international and national media reports, local community relations and RE in schools. However, since Christianity has always been a syncretic religion, taking from and adapting to the culture of the indigenous populations it encounters and assimilating and restructuring festivals, people and places to its purposes - although it would be foolhardy to suggest that this process has always been peaceful - it is possible to see how some of the contemporary Christian ideas about 'spirit' derive from the dualistic soul ideas preceding the establishment of the unitary soul concept in ancient Greece.

Bremmer (1983) considers that there are similarities between the Vedic soul belief in India and the early Greek concepts of psyche, or free soul which, within pre-

Homeric thinking, was part of a widespread belief in a dual soul comprised of a free soul and a body soul. The free soul was that vital part without which a person cannot survive and, although it represented the whole person, it had no psychological attributes, and was only active when it left the body temporarily during swoons or forever at death to go to Hades. The body soul, which was considered only to be active during an individual's waking life, was further divided into a life soul and an ego soul: the former was associated with the verb *psychein* (to blow or to breathe) since the act of breathing was linked with consciousness; and the latter was associated with major aspects of the personality (the source of emotions; actions of mind, thoughts or purpose; impulses of both mental and physical organs).

By the end of the fifth century BCE this duality seems to have developed into a unitary notion of the soul, now widely accepted in western thought. Indivisible in itself and representing the real core of a person's being, the soul may nevertheless be separated from the body. Although 'soul' or 'spirit' are used interchangeably today to describe that part of us which we consider lives on after death, it is rare to describe, while we are living, the essential part of us as 'soul.' In other words, we more usually refer to the 'spirit' of someone living and to the 'soul' of someone dead - except when, in evangelical Christian terms, there is an attempt to 'save the soul' of a living person in order to rescue them from unbelief.

A later Platonic description of the soul as tripartite (reason, spirit and appetite) introduced two ideas that also have influence today. First, that the 'spirit' is a disposition or strength of character which, through the development of wisdom, supports reason in ruling appetite. This idea foreshadows the modern psychological view that spirituality is an aspect of personality or character, embodying upright principles, or is the essence of an individual. The second suggestion - already implied by the first - is that desire or appetite, rather than reason, may rule people against their will, as St Paul recognized: "I do not

understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7: 15, NIV).

There may be some links between aspects of the concept of 'the soul' mentioned above and concepts of 'the spirit' in Christian thinking and writing of the early and patristic eras. 'Soul' once conveyed the idea of the essential, active component of a person (whether conscious, unconscious or dead), the breath of life, and integrated emotions, thoughts and actions. It has gradually become synonymous with 'spirit,' the essential part of a person which sustains life and survives death. For example, in Matthew 27: 50 the (free) soul leaves the body at death (the word is translated as 'ghost' in KJV and 'spirit' in NIV), and in Luke 8: 55 (KJV) the (life) soul "came again" when Jesus restored a woman to life. In I Samuel 18: 1(KJV) both religious and psychological-holistic notions seem reflected in the belief that the (ego) soul is the vital or essential part of a person that can "knit" with that of another.

Christianity is the only world religion concerned more with the death than the life of its founder because of St Paul's teaching about the significance of this event. It is possible to conjecture that guilt at being involved in Stephen's death led to a change in Paul and to his subsequent insistence on a positive outcome to the death of Jesus - on whose account Stephen had died - in terms of a changed life now and resurrection later both for Jesus and all who believe in him. Through his letters Paul also significantly shaped Christianity's doctrine regarding death itself. Judaism had moved from believing that nothing survived death to some sort of an expectation, probably influenced by the Maccabean revolt, of resurrection of the body. Paul reconciled Judaic and Greek thinking by teaching that: the dead Jesus would return soon (1 Thessalonians 4:16); those who contemplate Jesus' death are given new life (Galatians 2:20); a link exists between sin and death and Jesus' own death (Romans 6:23); and Jesus's resurrection validates Paul's preaching and people's faith (1 Corinthians 15: 13-14).

Whether or not we can accept that Christianity is founded upon Paul's bereavement experiences of guilt and resolution, it is impossible to avoid the profound effect of his teaching that all human death has been overcome by Jesus' death. Christianity's belief that the deceased believer is going to be 'with the Lord' may complicate the grieving process, and one of Robinson's (1977, pp 125-6) respondents (aged 47), epitomizes this conflict. Her father died when she was nearly 5 and she remembers not only her grief as "unutterable black emptiness of everything and everywhere" but also the social taboo on any reference to his name.

One part of me found this morbid grief unreasonable, because my father was supposed to have gone to be with Jesus in heaven where everybody was happy and all their questions were answered. ... If he was lucky enough to have been chosen to go and live with Jesus, I felt we should have been pleased for his sake, even though we missed him.

In chapters 5 and 7 I shall consider in more detail how far Christianity's view of death affects the bereavement experience of children and young people brought up within its influence.

### **Spirituality, religion and morality**

A connection, rather than a distinction, between spirituality and morality has long existed because of the belief that spiritual motives underlie moral behaviour. This link is first evident within early Christianity in the form of so-called pastoral ethics which emphasized morally correct behaviour. Based upon Judaism, Persian mystical religions and the teaching of Jesus, such an approach involved keeping the Ten Commandments, observing ritualistic practices such as baptism and following the divinely inspired teaching of Jesus. As already indicated, St Paul suggested that 'new' life in the Spirit of God produced changed attitudes towards other people and to life itself expressed in virtues such as love, peace, kindness, faithfulness, self-control (Galatians 5: 22-23), humility, gentleness and patience (Ephesians 4:2). Paul contrasted the 'new' life with the 'former' or 'other' life

containing vices to be avoided such as anger, theft, slander, sexual immorality, greed and drunkenness (Ephesians 4-5).

NCC states (1993, p 2) that "the potential for spiritual development is open to everyone and is not confined to the development of religious beliefs or conversion to a particular faith" since limiting spiritual development to this kind of description would exclude the majority of pupils "who do not come from overtly religious backgrounds." This attempt at inclusivism which declares that everyone has a spiritual nature may, however, also foster exclusivism by its apparent delimiting of religious beliefs and faith. For example, while Christians, Muslims and Jews may acknowledge that many people find fulfilment and purpose in life outside a theistic framework, nevertheless they hold a belief that God has chosen them as a special nation, faith community or as individuals for holiness. Similarly, although the Christian pastoral position recognizes that moral behaviour may occur among people not committed to a belief in God, it believes that the indwelling spirit of God provides the motive and basis for moral behaviour in a regular and systematic way. Evangelical Christians (Hughes, 1992) are critical of thinking which denies that spiritual development is a transformation by God, while many Muslims consider spiritual development to be "a movement of human beings from an egocentric form of life towards the divine or transcendental perfection" (The Islamic Academy, 1993, p 6).

The British Humanist Association, on the other hand, welcomes both theistic and non-theistic interpretations of spirituality and stresses that the school "should not be biased" towards one or the other interpretation but concerned instead with the "shared reality" of all pupils (BHA, undated, p1). While agreeing with Christians that the spiritual dimension is "the highest part of the human personality," humanists consider that these qualities evolved naturally and are not the image of God implanted in humanity as Christians believe.

Hull's (1993, p 3) sample suggests that today people do not link "spirituality with morality as basic aspects of human life" any more than, say, with art, music or literature. The perception that morality can be driven or prompted by motives and beliefs other than religious or spiritual ones certainly reflects much British thinking (see chapter 2 and earlier in this one), although it is important to bear in mind that such thinking may not represent all faith communities.

### **Perfect living and special experiences**

In seventeenth century Roman Catholic circles, particularly in France, so-called 'spiritual theology' comprising ascetic theology (progress up to the beginning of passive contemplation) and mystical theology (subsequent stages up to mystical union with God) continued to expound the belief that the Christian life consists of stages towards perfection (Sheldrake, 1991) (see also chapter 4). By the early decades of the twentieth century however, this dualism seems to have devolved into a discontinuity-continuity debate represented by Tanqueray, who continued to believe in this division between mystical prayer and ordinary growth in the moral life, and Garrigou-Lagrange, who claimed that mystical prayer is available to all because the Christian life is united and continuous (Sheldrake, 1991). In time supporters of the view espoused by Garrigou-Lagrange used the term 'spiritual' instead of 'spiritual theology' as a better description of the study of the whole of this life.

At about the same time there was great emphasis within the Protestant evangelical tradition on conversion, with adolescence identified as a significant crisis period ripe for this event. In America Starbuck (1901) and James (1901-2/1960) responded to this phenomenon from a scientific-psychological standpoint, significantly contributing to contemporary beliefs that the spiritual realm is the essence of or a characteristic part of human beings that is natural and available to all.

Starbuck attempted to prove that there was "no event in the spiritual life which does not occur in accordance with immutable laws" (1901, p 3) and attributed the observable changes in behaviour and thinking in spiritual phenomenon to concurrent biological growth. Since conversion seemed to occur mainly among 10-25 year-olds, he concluded that this was "a condensed form of adolescent development" (p 405). He considered that the many motives which prompt a conversion experience such as fear, remorse and response to teaching or example indicate increased social awareness and personal aspirations to improve or change, often manifest in depression, restlessness or anxiety. Starbuck mentioned cases where an impulse to conversion "dropped out of thought and was revived later" (p 46), one example of which was caused by bereavement in a girl of 16 who wrote:

When I was 10 years old mother died. I lost interest in everything; I felt dazed and lived in a dream until 16, when I attended revival. I had intense remorse. With tears came relief and joy; my whole life was changed from that hour.  
(p 47)

Contrary to Starbuck, however, I suggest that bereavement rather than conversion was the most significant early experience in her life. The shock of her mother's death prevented her emotions and intellect from being used for any other purpose - such as responding to religious teaching - until she had sufficiently recovered from her loss, had completed puberty, and was old enough to understand the implications of institutional teaching about conversion.

Starbuck suggested that spiritual phenomena, together with periods of carelessness and indifference when the body and mind recuperate from growth spurts, are typical of all development up until the age of about twenty-five, and that adult beliefs and attitudes of dependence, reverence and a sense of oneness with God develop from childhood notions of conformity, unconscious observance of religion, and personal rapport with a supernatural world and God. His ideas are relevant to Robinson's (1977) views on the experiences of childhood, to be discussed later in this chapter.

James (1960) focused on two types of adult religious geniuses "subject to abnormal psychical visitations" (p 29) whose extreme examples, he believed, yielded "profounder information" (p 465). The healthy minded 'once born' see God as the animating spirit of a beautiful harmonious world, behold no evil in life and are content in it, while "sick souls ... who must be twice-born in order to be happy" (p 172) are subject to sudden conversion experiences. Although such either-or descriptions of people are inappropriate today in educational documents and even in many religious circles, I think his attempt to explain the tendency for some - but not all - people to be subject to religious-spiritual experiences such as conversion and mystical prayer begins to recognize the significance of different personalities as well as differing individual experiences such as shock, unhappiness and grief. James refers to a 'twice-born' man who, when aged 14, felt that his father's response to his brother's death prompted in him the origins of a divided spiritual self which, even in adult life, he continued to see as "this terrible second me" (p 173). However, the phenomenon of watching oneself as if another person is often experienced in the early phases of grief (Sanders, 1989) - although it does not usually last a lifetime.

James hypothesized that the 'more' with which we feel ourselves connected in religious experience is the subconscious continuation of our conscious life, whether existing in a personal God or as a stream of ideal tendency embedded in the external structure of the world. This view seems to vindicate the common feeling that the external power with which we are moved is both 'higher' and yet 'linked' to us, both 'beyond' and 'within,' not only existing in its own right but also able to act for us when we embrace or unite with it in emotional and cognitive terms.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) reinforced the views of Garrigou-Lagrange and formally removed for Catholics the distinction between ordinary growth in the Christian life and the gifts of mystical prayer by declaring that all

Christians are called to one and the same holiness. Since the 1960s, both the Catholic and the Protestant Churches have been aware of an increasing interest in 'spirituality' by their members, with a shift away from reliance on a traditional body of knowledge, authority and tradition towards a greater reflection on human experience as an authentic source of divine revelation. Schneiders (1989, p 678) notes that the term 'spirituality,' once "an almost exclusively Roman Catholic term," is now being used to refer to lived experience (see later in this chapter) and is being adopted by religious and non-religious movements to refer to something that is experienced as similar by them all, although hard to actually define.

Apart from the established churches, other religio-philosophical sources have also contributed to the current idea of holistic, experiential, experimental spirituality. The hippy and counter-cultures of the 1960s and 1970s showed a desire for new forms of community and relatedness together with a rejection of the status-quo and deference for authority. Interest is now being legitimately displayed in the occult and magical, and new religious movements have emerged in the west this century: Church of Christ Scientist, Spiritualism, Theosophy, Rastafarianism, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Notions of religious 'truth' have probably been challenged everywhere as increased international travel, communication and immigration have brought together unfamiliar cultures and beliefs, and knowledge of eastern mystical traditions such as Sufism, Zen and yoga have influenced western thinking regarding ways of life, attitudes towards the body and possessions. In addition, postmodernism has undoubtedly influenced contemporary views of both morality and spirituality with its view of the ephemeral, fragmentary, chaotic and discontinuous nature of life (Harvey, 1989).

The emphasis by James and Starbuck on unusual experiences such as crisis conversions and individual mysticism, which influenced much early research into religious experiences, led to moves in Europe and America to study everyday spiritual experiences, including those of children and young people (eg: Klingberg, 1959; Elkind and Elkind, 1962; Hardy, 1979; Robinson, 1977; Hay, 1987). Such

experiences were sometimes precipitated by a death-related experience which both Starbuck and James had briefly mentioned. Klingberg found that 566 of the 630 essays in her study written by 9-13 year olds contained accounts of personal religious experiences, with 4% mentioning an encounter with death as a precipitating factor. The Elkins described six types of recurrent (strengthening and maintaining) experiences and five types of acute (testing) religious experiences among 144 written accounts by 13-14 year olds, with the 'lamentation experience' (bereavement and closeness to death) named by 14 of them. In this way - and perhaps for the first time, particularly for children and young people - experiences of bereavement were explicitly described as religious or spiritual experiences.

Robinson (1977) argues that the clear, 'original vision' of childhood events, including those of death and bereavement, which people remember many years later but may at the time consider to be imaginative fantasy, are actually valid forms of knowledge since they are essential to the development of mature understanding. He claims that these experiences are often imprecisely termed 'mystical experiences' and can only properly be understood when studied over a period of time. I think that the sense of timelessness, coherence and immediacy in the experiences described by Robinson's respondents reinforces the suggestion made by James that the subconscious plays a part in spiritual experience, whatever cause or meaning is attributed to the experience itself.

In America Fowler (1981) is investigating the development of what he calls people's 'faith.' He says that making meaning out of life involves feeling, knowing, understanding, valuing, experiencing and interpreting. 'Faith' includes all religious and non-religious ideologies because growth and development result from life crises, challenges and disruptions to everyday existence rather than development in cognitive understanding of any ideology or theology. His approach to spiritual-religious development tries to address the limitation found in the work of Piaget and Kohlberg regarding the separation of cognition from emotions but, more

significant from the point of view of this thesis, he recognizes the importance of life crises such as bereavement in the development of people's 'faith.'

In the UK, Hay et al (1978, 1987, 1990) continue to investigate ordinary people's everyday 'religious' experiences. In 1976 the Religious Experience Research Unit at Oxford used the National Opinion Polls to ask: "Have you ever been aware of, or influenced by a presence or power, whether referred to as God or not, which is different from your everyday self?" to which 63.6% negative and 36.4% positive responses were received (Hay and Morisy, 1978). In an analysis of a 1986 Gallup sample of British people, 18% described an awareness of the presence of the dead as a religious experience (Hay, 1990). The experiences of school children, including some who have been bereaved, are now also part of this investigation (Nye and Hay, 1995), and the 'Children and Worldviews' project recounts the thinking of some children: whether the deceased become angels (Erriker and Erriker, 1994a) and how smoke may be a metaphor for death (Erriker and Erriker, 1994b).

The next section will discuss how far in the late 1990s these various strands relating to the development and use of the concept 'spirituality' are present in the British educational situation.

### **Modern concepts of spirituality**

Spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal existence which are of enduring worth. It is characterised by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality. 'Spiritual' is not synonymous with 'religious'; all areas of the curriculum may contribute to pupils' spiritual development. (OFSTED, 1994a, p 8)

This statement is indicative of the evolving concept of spiritual in the 1990s and the gentle but persistent repudiation of 'religious,' characteristic of post-war years, which is part of the stream of rejection of church belonging and attendance. The changes that have occurred since the same word was used in the Education Act

of 1944 could not have been imagined then, some of which not previously mentioned are: a merging of religion and nationalism in the coronation and other war and memorial events; the changing role of women in society and their increased ability to control their own fertility; reform of prayer book services; new Bible translations; immigration from both Christian and non-Christian countries; introduction of a welfare state and a comprehensive education system; greater use of cremation rather than burial; increased consumerism, New Age thinking and products including alternative medicine; and an awareness of moving towards the new millennium, a so-called golden age. In their various ways, through such notions as inclusiveness, accessibility, comprehensiveness, holism and hope, each of the above has contributed towards what British people currently consider to be 'spiritual.'

It is interesting to ask what kind of religion OFSTED (1994a, p 8) is setting aside as "not synonymous with" spiritual as it will now be different from that in Britain in 1944. Although most people today are nominal Christians - only attending church or a place of worship at moments of crisis or for rites of passage (mostly funerals) - "it is equally evident that between two-thirds and three quarters of British people indicate fairly consistently that they believe in some sort of God," (Davie, 1994, pp 74-5), though it is difficult to know what people mean by this term (see also chapter 7). Compared with other European countries, British people say they believe more in a spirit or life force (41% compared with the European average of 30% in 1990) and heaven (53% compared with 42%) (Davie, p 78). Non-attendance at religious institutions has probably enabled British religious belief to develop further towards non-conformity through folk belief and hermeneutic interpretations, and although orthodoxy is at one end of the continuum, popular or "common" religion (p 77), sometimes superstitious in nature, seems to be at the other. Current educational documents are part of the expression of this variety and they may even become the new religious orthodoxy, representing both present citizens (parents) and future ones (pupils) since, with the encouragement of choice and diversity, some overall form of unity in today's society may be

perceived necessary in order to bind together people of widely different beliefs - whether orthodox Christian, nominal Christian or non-Christian. A common educational doctrine of the spiritual and the moral in education is one way of doing this.

Key themes which emerge from OFSTED's (1994a) description are that the inner life, which is related to spiritual development, leads to insight, particularly reflection, on existence and experience. A sense of meaning, a valuing of non-material dimensions and an awareness of an enduring reality may or will result. As I have already shown, these are not unorthodox Christian claims and although White (1994, p 372) thinks that phrases such as 'attributing meaning to experience' and 'intimations of an enduring reality' introduce religious assumptions "which not all would accept," the stress by NCC and OFSTED on the non-religious perspective is important - whether as a reaction against traditional Christianity or in response to the upsurging presence of other religious groups. Here educational legislation is painting a picture of common human qualities and abilities that will unite, not divide, present and future British citizens with the emphasis on spirituality as the *essence* of human beings, whatever their belief, and less focus on *motives* for action driven by belief and experience.

Both ideas - that spirituality refers to the essence of people and also to their motives - derive from Judaeo-Christian traditions (Carr, 1995). 'Spiritual' is the English translation of the Latin *spiritualitas* which, in its turn is a translation of the Greek word *pneumatikos*, a neologism coined by St Paul who used *pneumatikos* to describe things concerning the Holy Spirit of God because he perceived the spirit of the risen Jesus to be the same spirit or breath (*ruah*) of God which had given life to humanity (Genesis 2:7) (Schneiders, 1986). There is, therefore, a fine but important distinction to be drawn between the concept of spirituality which relates to essence and that which relates to motive. The first and probably older idea is that the spirit or breath of God gives life and, from this, a motive for living may also be derived, broadly expressed as: "Do the will of God in order to give

thanks for the gift of life." The second and more anthropomorphic concept suggests that intentions and motives - usually derived from beliefs - are what drive people to action and give purpose to their lives. Accordingly, meaning and purpose in life are often to be found in doing the will of God and in keeping moral codes which express God's ultimate goodness and truth.

How similar are theology and education in describing spirituality today? A comparison of concepts will be made next using four interlinking perspectives on 'spirituality' drawn from the work of contemporary Christian thinkers: Alexander (1980), Principe (1983), Schneiders (1986, 1989), Sheldrake (1991) and Bradford (1995).

#### **FOUR RELATED BUT INDEPENDENT DEFINITIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL**

... the 'spiritual' is that area of human experience that is not conceptualisable. If you conceptualise it, then it's not spiritual. The spiritual has been lost along with the living, moving thing. (Priestley, 1985a p 37)

I acknowledge that analysing may kill rather than explain such a concept but in what follows I shall try to convey, by showing how one idea flows into another, something of the complex 'living, moving thing' that constitutes spirituality.

1. Schneiders (1989, p 678) describes spirituality as "a fundamental dimension of the human being" - perhaps comprised of essential human needs for love, peace, wonder, joy and relatedness (Bradford, 1995). This description parallels educational views of it as "applying to something fundamental in the human condition" (NCC, 1993, p 2), and "the inner life" (OFSTED, 1994a, p 8). NCC (1993, p 2) describes the spiritual as having "a sense of awe, wonder and mystery" and feelings of transcendence (which seem to correspond to the 'religious' experiences catalogued by the Religious Experience Research Unit) as well as self-knowledge, creativity, and being in touch with, and gaining control, of one's feelings and emotions.

As this description also deals with "what is supremely personal and unique to each individual" (OFSTED, p 8), spirituality can be seen as both fundamentally similar in all humans and yet personal and unique in each one, a foundation to life but not a compartment of it. This is because nomothetic laws, which apply to all humans, shape the common characteristics which delineate us from other animate life while idiographic laws enable each of us to possess unique personal characteristics. Thus OFSTED's description seems to reinforce both Hay's (1987) notion of an inner personal space and James's (1960) suggestion that the subconscious continuation of our conscious life, often giving rise to religious or spiritual experiences, is both 'higher' and 'beyond,' yet 'linked' and 'within' us.

2. Spirituality is also "the lived experience which actualizes that (fundamental) dimension" of human experience (Schneiders, 1989, p 678) - "the real or existential level" or "the lived quality of a person" (Principe, 1983, p 135). It is shown in "how people live their faith" in an affective and personally integrated religious way (Alexander p 253) and is a "conscious human response to God", both personal and ecclesiastical (Sheldrake, 1991, p 37). Bradford sees one aspect of its manifestation in the faith-style of a person's lived (or practical) spirituality and the particular forms of that faith-style such as fellowship and service. NCC (p 2) says spirituality "has to do with relationships with other people and, for believers, with God," through our responses to "challenging experiences" such as beauty, suffering and death, the search for meaning and purpose in life as well as values to live by. OFSTED (1994a, p 10) seems to relate this perspective to "behaviour and attitudes ... which show awareness of the relationship between belief and action."

The first two definitions suggest the many practical forms of spirituality's expression, whether theological or not, such as qualities or virtues - related mainly to moral attitude and behaviour - which indicate the countless ways in which people inter-relate in an embodied way to each other (Thatcher, 1993). OFSTED

suggests that spiritual enquiry - "seeking answers to life's great questions" (1994a, p 8) - should be done in such an "open-ended" way that the "process of exploration" is assisted, rather than hindered by, human interaction and I would suggest that it is often furthered by sharing with those with whom one may disagree or feel out of tune. However, since asking such questions may also imply that there *are* answers to be had, an awareness of the conflicts between various 'answers,' both religious and otherwise, is needed in order to combat self-delusion (White, 1994).

3. Spirituality is "the integration of ultimate concerns and unrestricted values in concrete life" in ways that may be "without reference to a particular tradition" but take into account affective aspects of religion in general (Alexander, p 253). Concrete manifestations of affect can be found in both religious and secular art, architecture, music, dance, drama and writing or in aspects of people and the world. They may portray beauty, truth and goodness - whether or not one accepts such Platonic concepts of perfection - since their manifestation is witness to the human desire to create, care and critically appraise. In previous eras, the notion of divine or life-giving breath was contained in verbs such as 'aspire' (breathe towards) and 'inspire' (breathe in), derived from *spirare* (to breathe), and their use may in some sense convey the idea that something special - perhaps the wind or breath of God - can motivate humans into action. This idea is subliminally conveyed when 'aspire' and 'inspire' are used to describe activities in music, art and literature and, not surprisingly, it can be argued that contemplation of the created world and practical involvement in the arts is more accessible material for promotion of spirituality than acquiring religious knowledge (White, 1994).

4. Spirituality is to be found in those aspects of human life which are not often termed 'religious,' but are "seen by their subjects, or interpreted by their observers, as intentionally related to that which holds unrestricted value," such as the spiritual qualities of communism or atheism (Alexander, 1980, p 254). I think it

is in this wider sense of understanding aspects of life relating to spiritual values that NCC (p 2) states that spiritual and moral dimensions underpin the curriculum and ethos of the school. Fowler (1981, p 92), also, in a similar vein, describes 'faith' development as "people's evolved and evolving ways of experiencing self, others and the world." These ways are related to ultimate conditions of existence which shape the purpose and loyalties of people's lives. Notions of "spiritual quest" (OFSTED, 1994a p 8) asking 'Who am I?' 'Why am I here?' and 'Where am I going?' can encourage deeper reflection on many of those aspects of life and experiences that we all take for granted. As with the attribution of meaning, answers may take both theological and non-theological forms when the content of feelings, emotions and behaviour are critically considered.

I have already commented on the suggestion that spirituality is to do with valuing a non-material dimension, but I need also to add that this dimension may include values and aspirations such as health, wealth, happiness, security, success and helping others. Although "intimations of an enduring reality" (OFSTED, 1994a p 8) may refer to God or gods, they could also indicate a sense of continuity, of oneness with ancestors and contemporaries, a perspective on one's individual human place in the vast scheme of things (eg: as small and insignificant or as special and individual) and of humanity's place in the cosmos (eg: as having evolved or as being made in the image of God).

Overall, the four definitions allow for both specific and broad interpretations of 'spiritual' within theology and education. Two holistic themes, essence and motive, are explicitly expressed in the first two; the third deals with values and concerns that may be affective rather than cognitive and the fourth, still concerned with values, is a heuristic, analytic overview. Taken together they represent a shift from transcendence to immanence, from traditional to personal revelation showing that nowadays spirituality can mean a range of things such as: sensing a divine presence or something other than oneself; having a heightened awareness of events, encounters and experiences; and emotionally responding to people,

places, events and the natural world. An emphasis on spirituality as the subjective and individual life, once mainly exercised in cloisters, has developed into an interest in self and one's own personal growth (eg: Hammond et al, 1990) - and away from God and forms of knowledge.

Although White's (1994) critique is valid that certain phrases in the OFSTED (1994a) document are reminiscent of religious ideas ('intimations of an enduring reality', 'seeking answers to life's great questions'), I think the four descriptions help to show the concept in transition. While displaying characteristics of earlier thinking, it reshapes them into new forms as "a protest against all claims to finality" (Priestley, 1982, p 16).

## **THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF EDUCATION**

Spiritual development is an important element of a child's education and fundamental to other areas of learning. (NCC, 1993, p 3)

It is interesting that NCC sees "spiritual development" as "fundamental to other areas of learning" (p 3) because of its promotion of curiosity, self-understanding, awe and wonder. Is NCC suggesting that *only* spiritual development can encourage such motivating attitudes or does it mean that these attitudes are *examples* of spiritual development in action? In describing spiritual development as both an "important element" of education and "fundamental to learning" it reinforces the two ideas previously explored: that spirituality is both the essence or important element of something (in this case education) and is also its motive for action (inspiring and supporting other areas of learning).

In the following section I will discuss aspects of the four descriptions which relate more specifically to education, using ideas developed from Bradford's (1995) view that spirituality has three elements (human, devotional and practical) and King's (1985b) parallel vision of an education concerned with interiority (the self),

morality (self, others and the world) and spirituality (transcendence). Using these views I want to explore spirituality within education as:

- a fundamental human dimension and/or an inner self explored through reflection and insight and often expressed in creativity and art forms
- how people live their everyday lives and/or work out their personal insights, experiences and faith within the school community, through relationships, study habits, response to curriculum and contribution to school ethos
- the practical expression of the fundamental dimension and/or the lived experience, both within and outside of the school community through values and aspirations, and actions which reflect faith-styles and transcend human limitations.

### **Human spirituality**

This element refers to the essential human need for and to be able to express love, peace, wonder, joy, relatedness (Bradford, 1995), awe, mystery and other feelings of transcendence sometimes described as 'numinous' (Otto, 1959). Berger (1969) suggests that ordinary 'signals of transcendence' may already be evident in: the human desire for order seen, perhaps, as a re-creation of the complex orderliness of the universe itself; the human desire to play and to mark off time into serious and non-serious aspects and, thereby, to bracket out the reality of our journey towards death; the human ability to hope for future things, in continued refusal to accept our finitude; and the human ability to laugh at the limited and inadequate way we manage our affairs, perhaps sensing that such inadequacy is not final - that we will eventually be released from such human imprisonment. This kind of spiritual awareness seems to manifest itself first in feelings and emotions which are then articulated either in language or creative forms (Priestley, 1985b).

Experiential approaches (Hammond et al, 1990) within RE also attempt to investigate and understand the personal, subjective and insightful nature of such

experiences. These ideas enable the exploration of personal awareness and discernment through exploration of the senses, emotions and feelings, memory, imagination, and interaction with other people. Drama and dance contain similar approaches to understanding self and other people and music, art and design offer opportunities for self-expression through concrete and semi-concrete forms often using movement, space, colour, language, shape, light, sound and silence. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the increasingly popular 'Magic Eye' art books claim to offer "a hidden dimension that propels the viewer into a secret theatre" (N. E. Thing, 1994, cover).

Since dance, drama and music forms are ephemeral, they indicate the unrepeatability of events and of life itself. On the other hand, works of art, architecture and literature endure, indicating humanity's desire to transcend its limits, to create an enduring product, and to impose order. Whether deemed religious or secular, art forms can be concerned with transcendent values or involve more intimate and personal beliefs and feelings which affirm and give meaning to our human experience (Yeomans, 1993). Since art is neither right nor wrong but a representation of a particular point of view or way of seeing life, audiences, viewers and spectators may respond to these forms as they wish and, for some people, the artist's view may resound with their own.

Despite - or perhaps because of - the paradox of humanity's awareness of both its uniqueness within the created world and also its inevitable demise (Becker, 1973), we seem to try to leave behind something of ourselves, either through progeny, writing, works of art or simply ideas and memories. Enabling children and young people to 'know thyself' and to acquire skills and forms with which to express such knowledge is part of fostering fundamental human spirituality.

## **Devotional spirituality**

This element explicitly refers to the meeting of human spiritual needs within the culture and language of a particular religion. The need to be loved can be met through identity as a member, the need to feel secure can be nurtured through tradition, a response to wonder can form the framework for worship, the need to be affirmed can empower for service and the need for symbolic sharing can be met through the experience of community (Bradford, 1995).

Palmer (1983) likens schools to religious communities because they encourage study of the 'sacred texts' of secular society, disciplines of contemplation in reflection, research and analysis, and an awareness of communal life through the formal and hidden curriculum. Although teachers may not subscribe to the idea prevalent within religious communities that spiritual development involves imitation of methods and role-modelling of people, the methods, manner and personality of teachers undoubtedly influence pupils' perceptions of themselves.

It should also be noted that texts, research ideas and the curriculum are not value-free. Since they were written or formulated by people with specific (although often unacknowledged) points of view, contemporary reflection and analysis will be specific to the time and place in which they occur. Opponents of the term 'generic spirituality' draw attention to the error of the notion of 'a spirituality for all' since any spirituality is rooted in people's particular experiences in specific times and places and cannot be reproduced (Alexander, 1980; Lonsdale, undated; Schneiders, 1986, 1989; Sheldrake, 1991). Similarly, just as a Christian or Muslim place of worship has a distinctive flavour, a school community has a particular ethos which will be influenced by the joys and sorrows of its members. Like any religious community, it will also need to mark significant events such as death, and a school that has suffered the untimely death of members of its community is likely to have an ethos that is different from one that has not.

On the other hand, schools are not isolated from the rest of society like religious communities and pupils and teachers leave them daily in order to return to their homes. Schools are set within a neighbourhood and, consequently, influence and are influenced by the events of their area. For example, the attackers of headteacher Philip Lawrence (Charter, 1995) are members of that wider community and the fight Lawrence broke up between pupils and non-pupils may symbolize the edges of those boundaries. Although it is not possible to physically protect pupils from the surrounding community once they leave the school gates, schools can be short-term safe havens, enabling pupils to experience membership, security, empowerment and commitment to tasks which stand them in good stead elsewhere.

Within both human and devotional spirituality, the expression of ultimacy - infinity, absoluteness, transcendence, perfection, completion, inclusivity, supremacy (Phenix, 1964) - is vital to spirituality whether it is named as God, a divine or life force, The Inner Light or The Other. Since the language of spirituality tries to express ideas that 'go beyond' the immediate and to describe experiences that are both painful and enriching, forms frequently used to do this are myth, metaphor, parable, allegory, koan, story and poetry which convey paradox and ambiguity rather than literal meanings. In this way it becomes less important whether the story 'is true' than that it should convey 'a truth' (Priestley 1985a). Metaphors of journey (King, 1985b; Rudge, 1994) also encourage children and young people to see their present position in life as a stage along the way - although to what final end is not always made explicit.

Education is a complex of disciplines and ideals communicated in many ways, concerned overall with the education of all aspects of the person. The formal curriculum which is the practical expression of the theory of education, is mainly a classroom activity while the so-called hidden curriculum is comprised of words, deeds and actions in the corridor and playground, assemblies and collective

worship, and extra-curricular activities. Taken together these two aspects contribute to the general ethos of the school which, in its turn, can encourage devotional spirituality within education.

### **Practical spirituality**

This element refers to the expression of the other two through relatedness, values and beliefs (Bradford, 1995) and a concern for others, especially disadvantaged people. Although holding a belief in 'the next world' once seemed to inhibit expression of values and equality related to 'this world,' religious groups today often challenge social and political injustice and ecological threats, arguing that there is no other world but this one. Such practical expressions of deeply held beliefs is where the 'between-ness' of things (Thatcher, 1993), both animate and inanimate, is to be found and also where the apparent dilemma between inwardness (Hay and Hammond, 1992) and between-ness can be resolved. Both perspectives on life are necessary because, as individuals, we form our sense of identity through our relationships with others. Although we may spend our lives relating to many people, we are born alone and die alone. Coming to terms with the fact of each individual's unique beginning and ending may enable us to value life, to empathize with the grief of others, to work to prevent premature or sudden death and, ultimately, to accept and not fear death.

Whether or not we accept as valid the aspects of humanity described earlier as 'signals of transcendence' (Berger, 1969), their undisputed existence offers the opportunity for continuous reconstruction of meaning from them (Gobbel, 1980) and for contemplation followed by action (Dorr, 1990). Listening to one's inner self and its dialogue with others can lead to feelings and emotions which become channelled into action through formal and improvized opportunities. In other words, being moved or affected by the beauty of nature, the quality of a person, the perception of God's providence, or the experience of solidarity with powerless, grieving or poor people can lead to action to help others, promote peace, care for

the planet, or simply to give thanks. The links between contemplative moments (human spirituality) and active moments (practical spirituality) become evident when children and young people are given the opportunity to express their concerns in concrete forms.

Practical spirituality may be likened to morality since behaviour and activity on behalf of others are particularly evident. Individuals start to set themselves aside in favour of others - whether through a sense of duty, an awareness of consequences, or a feeling of compassion - and begin to be aware that however small their place in the broader picture may be, without the support and interdependence of such small parts the bigger whole cannot function. They recognize that the social construction of the world can be changed, that things are not implacable, and that individuals can make a difference. They may have an end-state in view and probably expect the route to that end-state to pass through a series of changes, each one generating discontinuity, but they perceive overall continuity in terms of the unity of the thing under scrutiny. In other words, they begin to understand the concept of development and become part of it.

This realization seems to reflect stage 4 of Kohlberg's theory wherein the right thing is defined as doing one's duty in society, upholding the social order, and maintaining the welfare of society or the group. People at stage 4 take the viewpoint of the system, which defines roles and rules, and consider individual relations in terms of their place in the system. This is not to suggest that human spirituality and devotional spirituality reflect lower stages in Kohlberg's theory (although there may be parallels in terms of interactions between self and a limited number of others), but rather that practical spirituality may consolidate previously disparate expressions of care for other people and things.

When spirituality is seen as neither discontinuous nor dualistic it becomes inclusive and leads to acceptance of theological and non-theological meanings and religious and non-religious (or secular) beliefs and practices. An

understanding of spirituality as both essence and motive derived from religious origins may be paralleled in moments of contemplation and action. How far such meanings can contribute<sup>to</sup> 'spiritual development' for all pupils will be discussed next.

## **THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Since there is probably no doubt that most schools today reflect the prevailing non-religious, even secular mood of the times, it is important to identify which ideas they hold about spirituality in order to decide if this form of development is possible. I think it unlikely that any school can promote spiritual development if its teachers consider that spirituality reflects any of the dualistic theories or discontinuous views previously mentioned. In other words, spirituality cannot be promoted if it is seen as *only*:

- a motive for morally correct behaviour
- the reflection of the image of God
- the opposite of sexuality or materiality
- other-world or ascetic practices
- the study of scripture and writing about the subject
- rational debate
- ecclesiastical artefacts or possessions, or
- something available to just a few people.

In the past it has meant all of these things and our current understanding of its meaning has been shaped by such thinking, but it is necessary to revise or discard out of date, inappropriate historical-cultural arguments and ideas in order to clarify current meanings. However, while some dualisms (eg: spiritual-material) certainly need abandoning, other dichotomies (eg: of language which uses parable and paradox) may usefully express apparently irreconcilable opposites of ultimate experience. Such language may also help to combat individual-public

attitudes which refuse to acknowledge the social and political inequalities of 'this world.'

If spirituality is seen as holistic and continuous, then schools may be able to promote it. Everyday life - especially school life - does not encourage much physical separation from other humans in order to contemplate 'other' or 'ideal' worlds, values or ways. It leads rather to the acquisition of personal skills and attitudes, and concepts of self, other people and the world in order to encourage harmonious living. However, the need for contemplation and reflection on the affairs of life is ongoingly necessary. Experiences of death may particularly encourage this need because the bereaved pupil (and perhaps her or his friends) may display changed and new emotions, an overall capacity to cope with change and loss, or come to recognize the finitude of human life, the limitations of human knowledge and experience, and of time and place. Acknowledging and exploring these feelings and ideas when they arise may promote spiritual development.

### **Can schools hope to promote spiritual development for all pupils?**

The notion that pupils will develop spiritually raises the expectation that this is an area in which pupils can make progress. (NCC, 1993, p 3)

If spirituality is deemed to be an integral, holistic and communal search for meaning and purpose that all pupils whatever their religious persuasion can pursue, this expectation seems correct. NCC is right, therefore, to focus on the likelihood that schools will not recognize such development rather than that children and young people will not develop. NCC (p 3) describes six "steps" by which such progress might be identified and OFSTED (1994a, pp 9-10) also names five "qualities" that pupils may demonstrate as evidence of the provision for such development in school. I think this approach is both laudable and short-sighted, however, because it fails to recognize the long-term nature of such development and the limited role of schools in it.

For example, Coles (1990) spent more than thirty years trying to understand the spiritual life of children and young people. Sometimes he worked in schools - although never as a full-time teacher - or talked, often over lengthy periods of time, to children in their homes or in hospital, about their desires, ambitions, hopes, worries, fears and "moments of deep and terrible despair" (p 108). He listened to them telling each other that:

... you have to find something to believe in; you can't just say it's all nothing out there. ... there's beauty, there's the ocean and the waves and the sand and the seashells, and there's people, your parents, my folk, our friends.  
(pp 298-9)

Since such in-depth opportunities are not available to teachers with a curriculum to deliver, it is reasonable to assume that a lot of what constitutes spiritual development will be unvoiced in school. For example, when Coles experienced difficulties in talking with Hopi children he recognized the limitations of relying upon responses in structured situations such as schools. A Hopi woman told him:

they won't ever want to talk with you about the private events of their lives in this building. They learn how to read and write here ... you are asking them about thoughts they put aside when they enter this building (p 24).

One can argue that the Hopi perception is unusual but pupils in Britain may be just as hesitant to explore their private feelings and insights - even when careful attempts are made to allow them to do so (eg: Plant and Stoate, 1989; Hammond et al, 1990; Ward and Houghton, 1995).

However, whether consciously or otherwise, children and young people are always trying to understand what is happening to them and why (see Preface). In order to do this they employ whatever religious traditions, scientific and popular explanations and personal experiences and insights they have. Everyone at some stage in her or his life asks the eternal questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Why is this happening to me? Where am I going? but they may not do this explicitly during the years at school or even during school time itself. In fact, it is my contention that the experiences of illness and bereavement - which

can never be planned, provided or promoted by school - present unique and specific opportunities for just such questioning and development. When people become ill or lose a loved one through death they often examine their past life, present conditions and future prospects and, whether logical or not, try to work out if they have 'deserved' the pain they are experiencing. Such self-examination can lead to new views of oneself and one's place in the world. However, the timing of such life experiences is unpredictable and schools often do not know (and there is no reason why they should) when a pupil is bereaved, unless the death is of parents or siblings.

In theory it is possible for all pupils 'to develop' spiritually in the fundamental human sense of self-exploration and self-expression through the arts and other areas - although focusing on self may lead to competitiveness and selfishness while focusing on other people may better encourage co-operation and care. Schools can further encourage and support this fundamental form of development through the formal and hidden curriculum and also provide opportunities for practical expression of concern and care for others through fund-raising, letter writing, visiting and sponsorship. Pain, suffering and death - whether among family and friends or seen on television - are part of the human condition, and some pupils who meet these experiences earlier rather than later in life may start to consider the meaning and purpose of such events in advance of their peers.

However, even when encountered earlier, pupils may not have the emotional and intellectual capacity to respond in ways that can easily be identified as 'development.' Teachers are not the only significant adults in their pupils' lives and see only part of an on-going process and never the end-state - whatever that state may look like. Furthermore, since an end-state response to bereavement can take years to achieve (see chapter 5), it may be indistinguishable from other on-going responses to life events. Therefore I think it is over-optimistic for OFSTED to evaluate spiritual development from what schools provide or promote

as other life events can have far more impact than the curriculum, ethos and intellectual life of a school.

### **Spiritual trends in British society and its young people**

There is increased commitment in the west among people of all ages and walks of life to secure social, environmental and political justice (eg: Amnesty, Greenpeace, World Development Movement), some of which (eg: liberation theology) is explicitly linked to religious ideology. Less explicitly religious are the campaigns to protect the planet and its inhabitants - both human, animal and vegetable - from damage, disease and death in recognition of what the global consequences of such losses could be. This kind of action is the result of factors such as improved international communications, applied scientific knowledge and the application of broadly religious principles of care and love for others. In Britain television has promoted in many children and young people an increased awareness of the plight and needs of other living creatures together with the opportunity to raise funds to alleviate these situations (eg: Blue Peter, Comic Relief), and interpretations of 'love thy neighbour' are increasingly applied to people in other nations in ways that transcend original Judaeo-Christian notions.

Nowadays, British young people are likely to express what is increasingly being termed secular spirituality (see chapter 1) in awareness of the sacredness of life and the needs of others less fortunate than themselves, commitment to global renewal and social justice, and belief in the value and importance of the present moment. An adherence to traditional beliefs and religious practices for one's own salvation alone appear to be increasingly rare.

In these ways new ideas of 'spirituality' have emerged. As Hull's (1993) analysis shows, it is no longer mainly associated with any one Christian tradition or even with Christianity as a whole and a recognition has slowly arisen, reflected even in educational documents, of two mutually compatible ideas: that every religion has

its own distinctive spirituality and that every human has her or his own particular spiritual dimension or quality. Spirituality has also ceased to be the simple application of absolute principles to life in accordance with theology (Sheldrake, 1991), and is moving from an adherence to morally specific ways of life towards an exploration of individuality, intuition and subjective experiences. Spirituality is now more concerned with understanding the complexity of human growth, whether or not in the context of a living relationship with the divine, than with defining perfection .

Furthermore, an understanding of the spiritual life as continuous and united, rather than as discontinuous and fragmented, has encouraged a reconsideration of the relationship between spirituality and ethics (Sheldrake, 1991). This insight has led to interest in dispositions of character rather than quality of actions, to a focus on the unity of human beings rather than on the details of human behaviour. In this way an understanding of the importance of intention, motivation and affect on moral behaviour has developed. A more human, inclusive and experiential approach to spirituality now exist with less emphasis on a hierarchical conception of the spiritual life, with its attendant language of 'stages', 'ladders' and 'detachment' achieved by formulae and rules, together with an increased valuing of so-called feminine virtues such as nurture, compassion, feelings and subjectivity (see chapter 4).

In the light of these reflections, I propose the following forms of feeling, thinking and behaving as indicative of individual spiritual development particularly related to experiences of death and bereavement.

- Being prepared to move into new territory (beliefs, practices, experiences, thinking) while recognizing that this 'new territory' may be a familiar one for other people.
- Exploring new language and ways of self-expression; trying to explain complicated or previously unexpressed ideas and feelings.

- Recognizing the complexity of self, other people and the world; beginning to abandon or rethink previously held answers and solutions.
- Tolerating and/or bearing pain, disappointment, sorrow and loss; realizing that life can continue after such experiences.
- Recognizing, however briefly, one's own finitude and taking that into account in future life plans.
- Understanding and appreciating the relative truth of one's own religious and spiritual beliefs; beginning to see the local, time-restricted context in which such ideas evolved.
- Acquiring and/or formulating a philosophy of life for the present period of one's life; adapting and/or abandoning it at a later period.

As with the list at the end of chapter two, I shall explore in Part Two how far these forms are apparent in any of my respondents.

## CHAPTER FOUR : ARE THERE STAGES IN MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?

### Introduction

In exploring the question of 'stages' of development I want to distinguish between two views: a general view of human development in terms of growth and change usually measured according to age and critical periods, and a specific focus on moral and spiritual development, as described by disciplines such as theology, philosophy, psychology and sociology, and particularly expounded by Piaget and Kohlberg. Since the last approach has significantly influenced educational views of stage development, I wish to show how such definitions of individual moral or spiritual development fit into broader theories of human development within creation.

### HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

*Jacques: All the world's a stage  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. (Shakespeare, 1963, As You Like It)*

Jacques' description of the parts that people 'play' in life (although only male roles are explicit) expresses the notions that development involves growth, change, progression and role versatility. His seven 'ages' - which hint that death follows the last - describe two aspects of physical development (infancy and senility) and five social and employment roles appropriate for his time (schoolboy, lover, soldier, justice and pantaloon). Even today these are the two most common means of describing levels or stages of human development and, although descriptions of employment roles change, stage theory thinking is chiefly based on ideas of physical development according to notions of significant ages, critical periods or eras, and social roles in life.

## **Stages and specific ages**

Growth and change are so evident in physical forms of development that we unthinkingly assume that a baby will grow into a child, a child into an adolescent, an adolescent into a young adult, and a young adult into an older adult. However, even the age of 'old' people is constantly being extended as improved medical and health care prolong the lives of all.

Marking development according to specific ages is a common form of celebration and measurement in many cultures, and birthdays are usually celebrated or marked in some way. For example, on 15th November Japanese children aged 7, 5 and 3 are feted in the festival of *shichi-go-san* and in former Soviet society developmental theorists considered that particular changes occur in children at 3, 7 and 11 years. Many Soviet theorists assumed that humans acquire the historical and social features of the species at particular ages and that these characteristics are as significant as biological ones (Davidov, 1990). The coincidence of concrete stages of social and educational upbringing with these theoretical periods probably enabled individuals in Japanese and Soviet societies to identify the goals of development set for them by the larger social group.

Apart from National Curriculum key stages, other forms of age-related stages in England and Wales are socio-legal initiations regarding the age at which young people can leave school (16 years), have heterosexual intercourse (16), buy nicotine (14), a firearm (17), alcohol (18), drive most vehicles (17), or vote (18). As well as the confusing complexity of these laws regarding when adulthood is achieved (eg: old enough at 17 to buy a gun but not to vote), moral imperatives are usually implied regarding involvement in or restraint from such activities and, following the death of James Bulger, the legal age of moral responsibility has been extended downwards from 14 to 10 years, depending on the circumstances of the crime and whether or not children can be deemed to know the legal and moral implications of their actions (Gibb, 1995).

Most age-related stages of development depend upon currently prevailing social, legal, educational and religious practices for their significance. For example, Judaic belief in the prevalence of bad inclinations (yetzer hara) until the age of 12 or 13 when good inclinations (yetzer hatov) begin to prevail has resulted in a form of religious initiation (bat- and bar-mitzvah) which may merely mark biological age rather than the emotional and spiritual maturity that the event celebrates. I suggest that age alone is not a good indicator of human development since the stages delineated by age depend upon nomothetic rather than idiographic views of development.

### **Critical periods or eras and psycho-social roles**

Other theorists who have tried to plot stages of development according to periods of life or occurrence of particular incidents (which often imply moral and spiritual development) tend to use age as a physical or social role indicator. Even when the whole of life is envisaged, there is usually greater clarity concerning the earlier stages of development - probably because the age of death is always uncertain and medical care continues to extend the average life expectancy.

Freud's (1905) psychosexual theory is often interpreted as describing norms of physical and psychological development and, insofar as these stages of maturation must occur in a certain sequence, his theory seems correct. Erikson's (1950) psychosocial stages are hierarchical, since he believes that how well the task of each stage is resolved affects an individual's ability to deal with subsequent tasks. He does not simply equate development with biological maturity but suggests an unbroken continuum of adaptation and resolution to the physical, emotional and cognitive challenges of life with which view I concur. Coleman's (1980) 'focal' theory of adolescent development explains how young people cope with so much stressful change in their lives by dealing with one issue at a time, and although his theory seems broadly applicable to our present youth

culture, such sequences cannot be considered immutable. Levinson's (1990) view of the human life cycle divided into four 'eras' of roughly twenty years, with significant transition periods, suggests a life expectancy of 80 years that not all may attain.

Jung, who describes life as "an energy process" which is irreversible and directed towards an end-point - a state of rest (1959, p 4) - uses the sun as a metaphor for the human life course and suggests that a mid-life transition occurs at the sun's zenith. Fowler's (1981) six stages of faith, which only roughly correspond with ages, may emerge at different times in life in response to life crises, challenges and disruptions. Although he says that the synthetic-conventional faith stage (stage 3) may continue for the rest of life, he describes universalizing faith (stage 6) as a "normative endpoint" (p 199) which implies a hierarchy both of structure and values.

Jung's view that conscious life problems dominate the second and third quarters reflects Kubler-Ross's (1969, p 106) belief that

at the end of our days, when we have worked and given, enjoyed ourselves and suffered, we are going back to the stage that we started out with and the circle of life is closed.

After Bowlby (1981) developed Kubler-Ross's stages of dying into stages of bereavement, many people perceived these to be absolutes (rather like Piaget's stages) and expected themselves, their clients or people they knew to be 'in' the appropriate stage. Sanders (1989) and Worden (1991) have refuted or elaborated upon these ideas and it is possible to observe in their theories a move from concern with self to an awareness of others and, sometimes, to a broader perspective on living as different emotions and attitudes dominate. I do not wish to suggest from the diagram below, however, that all the stages, phases or tasks are parallel.

**Table 4. 1** Overview of moral and spiritual perspectives in some theories of dying and bereavement

Kubler-Ross: stages of dying	Sanders: phases of grieving	Worden: tasks of grieving
denial: to comfort self, family or conform to medical/ hospital expectations	shock: disbelief, confusion, restlessness, feelings of unreality and isolation	accept reality of loss
anger: to ask 'Why me?' and remind other people of one's existence	awareness of loss: stress, anxiety, conflict, sensing deceased's presence	experience pain of grief
bargaining: with God, the medical profession, family and life events to delay inevitable event	withdrawal: despair, helplessness, recognizing need to either move forward in grieving, remain still or give up living	adjust to environment in which deceased is missing.
depression: adjusting to loss of life and life's opportunities	healing: sensing a turning point, resuming control, restructuring one's identity	withdraw emotional energy from deceased to allow involvement with other people
acceptance: focusing on future and gradually disengaging from loved ones	renewal: new self-awareness, accepting responsibility, living without deceased	withdraw emotional energy from deceased to allow involvement with other people

New patterns of lifetime change in feeling, thinking and behaving are continually being drawn in line with the late twentieth century expectation, encouraged by medical and health care, that death will occur between 60-95 years for most people (Reanney, 1991). In the future, physical stages of development (or maturation) may remain broadly constant but social and employment roles and critical life periods are already changing.

## **MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

One might go so far as to say that all theories of development are theories of moral development. (Moran, 1987, p 166)

... one does not have to depart from ordinary usage to attach meanings to the notion of 'spiritual development' which can be put to work in the context of education. (Hill, 1989, p 181)

As I explained in chapter 3, spirituality and spiritual development are harder to conceptualise and measure than morality and moral development because of a focus on inner experience regarding the former and thinking and behaviour regarding the latter. For this reason I shall explore notions of stages in moral development first and spiritual development second.

In the industrialized west Piagetian thinking has undoubtedly prompted further analysis of 'stages' of development in both cognitive and moral development and, as I have shown, as well as Kohlberg, stages, eras or levels are to be found in the work of Erikson, Coleman, Fowler, Levinson, Loevinger (1976) and Perry (1970). The differences between stages related to physical age or psycho-social eras and those considered to possess internal psychological consistency will be explored next with reference to Kohlberg's work since it by far the most influential in moral development.

### **Hierarchical stages in moral development**

The distinction in Kohlberg's work between stages of moral development and stages of justice reasoning has not always been easy for the reader to make, perhaps because of the apparent link between physical development and the development of cognitive skills of logic. In fact Kohlberg (1984) claims that advanced moral reasoning must be advanced logical reasoning because there is a corresponding horizontal sequence of movement from logic to social perspective and role-taking, and then to making moral judgements and taking moral actions as the individual passes from earlier to later stages. Moran (1987, p 164) makes an interesting suggestion that twentieth century moral development theory "functions as the secular substitute for providence, predestination and heavenly salvation" - albeit without any divine guiding hand or final reward - and, in this light, Kohlberg's stories of hypothetical dilemmas may be seen as modern parables.

Like Piaget, Kohlberg first described his data as "defining ideal types rather than strict sequential stages" (1984, p xxiv). However, after obtaining empirical data using cross-cultural, cross-sex and longitudinal methods, and employing a method of assessment which he believed revealed invariant sequences regarding three characteristics of Piagetian stages (invariant sequence, structured wholeness and hierarchical integration), he felt sufficiently confident to define this set of developmental types as 'stages.' It is important, though, to remember that these 'stages' are not of moral development per se but of cognitive thinking about moral issues. In recognition of the confusion and, probably in order to gain wider acceptance for the particular scope of his theory, Kohlberg (1984 p 224) declares:

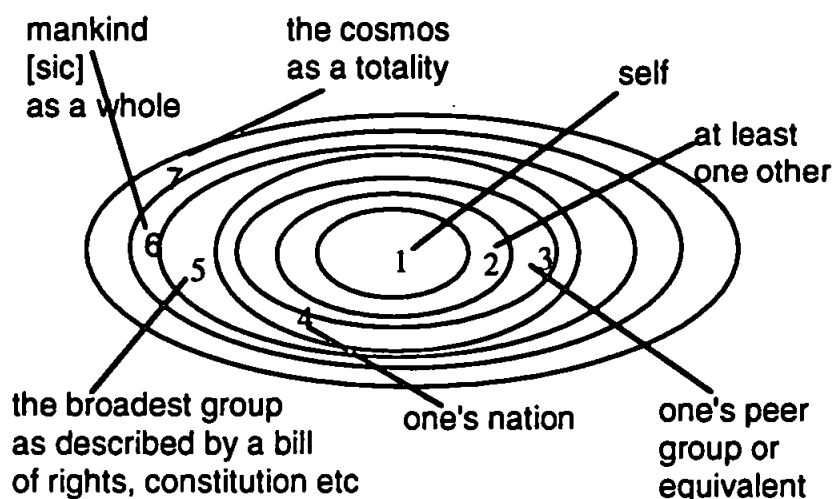
... we now need to emphasize the nomenclature 'justice reasoning' since the Kohlberg stages have more typically been called stages of moral development. I have always tried to be clear that my stages are stages of justice reasoning, not of emotions, aspirations or action.

We can see, therefore, that Kohlberg's stages of justice reasoning are cognitive stages that children and young people are likely to pass through if given sufficient stimulation for conflict through the presentation of ideas and hypothetical situations. At best some young people will reach stage 4 by the time they leave school - although many will not - and quite a lot of adults will never reach stage 4 at all in their lives. When Kohlberg and Kramer (1969) found apparent regression in postconventional respondents, the scoring methods and stage theory were revised to correct what was considered to be a confusion between form and content, and a transitional substage 4.5 was introduced (Appendix 1). Nowadays only a few people are expected to reach stage 5 but none can ever reach stage 6, once rejected as a theoretical construct suggested by the writing of elite figures (Bergling, 1981) and refined as a hypothetical "terminal stage to define the nature and endpoint of the kind of development we are studying" (Kohlberg, 1984, p 271). Stage 7, also, described as a hypothetical stage - but a 'soft' or existential rather than 'hard' structural stage - does not appear in later overviews (Kohlberg and Ryncarz, 1990).

## Hard and soft stages

According to Kohlberg (1984, p 237) 'hard' stages are cognitive ones, involving formal Piagetian thinking while 'soft' stages involve a self or ego "consciously making meaning for itself," using affective and reflective characteristics "not easily assimilated to the Piagetian paradigm." I think Carter's (1987, p 91) depiction of Kohlberg's stages as "the path of increasing awareness of one's own relation to another" shows the intensification and multiplication of interaction with others that both moral and spiritual development involve. Stages 1-3 deal with face-to-face relationships, stages 4-6 with vaster, anonymous groups and stage 7 with a 'relationship' with the cosmos (eg: people, animals, vegetation, stars and planets) which transcends individuality. However, since stage 7 is a soft, hypothetical stage, serving as a *reason* for morality, I believe its perspective is available to all in varying degrees - unlike stage 6 which is a cognitive endpoint of justice reasoning.

**Figure 4. 2** Awareness of inter-connecting human relationships



A stage 7 perspective enables people to have a higher consciousness of their place within creation and to perceive their own death as part of the creative process of the universe. In this sense, they perceive a great cosmic truth: that nothing ever dies and humans are an integral part of creation (Reanney, 1991).

## **Hypothetical and real-life dilemmas**

Gilligan (1982) interviewed women deciding whether to have a child or to abort the pregnancy and, after listening to college students' accounts of 'the things that have influenced you most during the year,' Perry (1970) postulated nine 'Positions' in intellectual and ethical development, some of which overlap with Kohlberg's. Murphy and Gilligan (1980) used Perry's (1970) scheme (which progresses from formal operations through a transition crisis to a post-formal operational equilibrium) to explore the apparent paradox that some of Kohlberg's principled respondents had regressed. They found that respondents began to abandon absolutist moral judgements and objective truths, seeking 'best fit' strategies instead, in recognition of the 'shades of grey' in real-life moral situations. Murphy and Gilligan argue that this necessary transition into adult moral thinking - which Kohlberg's theory of justice reasoning sees as regression from formal thinking - is the point at which his theory fails to distinguish between the absolutism of teenage logic and principled but contextual adult thinking.

Gilligan et al (1990) argue that intellectual and ethical development continue beyond the teen years in a dialectical rather than a formal mode of reasoning when the complicated nature of relationships and situations is better understood in adult life. They found that respondents in their 20s, previously scored as post-conventional, when faced with real-life moral dilemmas were unable to apply the single principle of justice in order to treat each individual with equity and reciprocity because of conflict with issues of care and responsibility.

It is also important to recognize that the view of morality that is expressed is probably determined by the form of the moral dilemma. Hypothetical dilemmas of conflicts of rights reveal deontological thinking in reciprocity while real-life dilemmas of conflicting relationships reveal empathic thinking. In real life, situations of conflict are never resolved by the exclusive application of the principle of justice and this gradual replacement of deontological certainty with

relational uncertainty, beginning in the teenage years means "that few if any of us are likely, in practice, to be totally consistent" (Hirst, 1974, p 15). When consistency falters, stage definitions in the strict Piagetian sense must also be in jeopardy as Murphy and Gilligan (1980) and Gilligan et al (1990) have shown.

### **Principles of justice and caring**

... we admit that "the 'principle' of altruism, care, or responsible love has not been adequately represented in our work. (Kohlberg, 1984, p 227)

Since thinking is easier to analyse than affect or behaviour because it can be linguistically recorded, and deontological rather than prosocial thinking is more amenable to structural stage analysis, Kohlberg's theory has accustomed us to thinking of morality as reasoning in increasingly complex ways. Justice rests on a premise of equality whereby everyone (including the respondent) should be treated the same while care rests on a premise of non-violence, that no one should be hurt.

Kohlberg asserts that a focus on justice "restricts morality to a central minimum core" because it "asks for 'objective' or rational responses" (1984, p 306) and he explains that in his work:

Scoring procedures and questioning have focused on judgements that were prescriptive and universalizable, *ignoring statements of personal feeling or those attempting to rewrite the dilemma. Rewriting dilemma responses are central concepts of care and responsibility.* (p 304, my italics)

This admission strongly suggests that Kohlberg's questioning methods have always elicited care responses which, because they have not supported his theory, have been disregarded. While this approach may be legitimate in terms of data gathering - since justice reasoning is what Kohlberg sought to analyse - it may have had a significant effect upon readers' perceptions of what moral thinking consists of since a one-sided view of justice issues has been consistently presented.

As I have shown, contemporary discussions of stages in moral development include discussions of hierarchical integration and distinctions between hard and soft stages, hypothetical and real-life dilemmas, and principles of justice and care. Some of these issues will be raised again when exploring stages of spiritual development but, since the field of enquiry has not been so clearly defined in terms of issues such as justice reasoning, discussions of spiritual development have been presented in a less cognitively rigorous way. I recognise this difference in my change from psychological to philosophical language, and in the shift from debates about justice and care to the use of metaphors.

### **Traditional stages in spiritual development**

Although I suggest there may be rather less firmness in discussions of stage development within spirituality, I have already shown that religious literature has consistently suggested that human life consists of stages and that within Roman Catholic circles, where the term 'spiritual' is common, an idea of at least two stages or levels in the Christian life - ordinary growth and extraordinary growth - was prevalent until Vatican Council II. Within Christianity overall the distinction between laity and clergy has often implied a spiritual hierarchy, and saints - whether lay or ordained - are usually deemed to reach the highest stage of all.

While the principle of justice has been a key issue in recent cognitive and psychological analyses of moral development, those of care and benevolence - with an accompanying sense of responsibility - have long been considered as equivalent or even superior to justice within Christian thinking. Such attitudes form a necessary basis for moral behaviour - the hallmark of life in the Spirit of God (Galatians 5: 22-23) - and in medieval Christian writing, 'stages' of development in spirituality with care and benevolence as a basis can be found.

The anonymous medieval text, The Cloud of Unknowing (1974, p 80), describes 'two lives,' the active and contemplative, comprised of 'three parts', the second part forming a bridge between the two 'lives.' The first part, described as "good", consists of "the good and honest physical works of mercy and charity"; the second part, described as "better", consists of spiritual meditations; and the third part, described as the "best of all", consists of "the dark cloud of unknowing" containing many secret acts of love to God. Thus the first part comprising works of mercy and charity is recognized as the basis for both the active and contemplative life and while not everyone is expected to aspire to the contemplative life, the active life is available to all.

There are at least three reasons why such traditional stage thinking in spirituality is inappropriate today, however. First, the medieval model of a hierarchy of love, with the same elements present at every stage in differing proportions, perceives the final stage of love of God as the end-point of the earlier stages of love of humanity. However, as I have suggested in chapter 3, twentieth century thinking is more likely to consider love of one's neighbour as the expression of one's love of God, rather than the other way around. Second, contemplative stages previously implied disengagement from 'this life' and immersion in 'the other life' which would be impossible in contemporary spiritual movements, both secular (eg: ecological) and religious (eg: liberation theology) and in schools. Third, although higher stages suggest increased awareness of and communion with God, these seem to be experiences that non-religious people (Hay, 1990) and bereaved ones (Sanders, 1989) have from time to time anyway (see also chapter 5). For many non-religious people in Britain today, a more accessible approach to spiritual development may be inductive rather than deductive, through individual experience and reflection rather than study, lifestyle, rational knowledge and revelation (Hay, 1990).

One of the reasons why there has been such an emphasis on 'this life' as a basis for 'the next' in spirituality may be the prevalence of a fear of death and a

simultaneous desire, expressed in all religious thinking, for immortality. There seems to be a self-reinforcing cycle that says "there must be a tomorrow because there have been thousands of yesterdays" (Reanney, 1991, p 12) which carries over into an assumption that after death (dark) there will be another life (light). Theories of resurrection and reincarnation may correspond closely with the way our minds work and while Judaeo-Christian and Islamic faiths consider this pattern to be repeated only once in resurrection, Hinduism, Buddhism and other Indian faiths consider it to be repetitive through rebirth or reincarnation. Humanity inevitably seeks continuity rather than discontinuity and some nineteenth century Christian writers particularly expressed this notion in describing the death of a child as "the most obvious case of progress in heaven" whereby they "gained training unknown on earth" in the presence of Jesus (McDannell and Lang, 1988, p 286). The Christian conversion experience - which is seen as a significant stage of development for evangelical believers - values the emphasis on 'dying to self' and moving forward into a 'new life.'

Since we are all, in a sense, dying and are merely at varying stages away from death, it is possible to see our lives as a journey towards this inevitable event and then away from it. Death itself is often seen as the doorway into another life or a journey to another place. Of death as a doorway, Holland (cited in Neuberger & White, 1991, p 155) writes:

Death is nothing at all. I have only slipped away into the next room. ... I am but waiting for you for an interval somewhere very near just round the corner. All is well.

Perhaps the need for individual spiritual stages will fade if we become consciousness that our individual dying is both a doorway and a journey which contributes to the continuing life of the cosmos.

## **New stages in spiritual development**

Kohlberg's stage 7 involves enhanced awareness of one's place in relation to other people, the earth and the cosmos which requires the dissolution of psychological and concrete barriers between living beings. Adopting a cosmic perspective on the importance of human life, other life forms and the universe parallels Reaney's (1991) belief that individual ego-consciousness but not cosmic consciousness is extinguished by death. Such consciousness does not depend on cognitive development or acts of contemplation, although it may indicate the operation of the principles of both justice *and* care. It is probably what Robinson (1985) termed 'transfiguration,' a state (if one can call it that) which can occur in "quite a weak degree" (p 251) when some familiar incident or sight takes on a new and unfamiliar meaning or pattern and purpose.

This 'new' stage is not really a stage in the sense of 'hard' stage thinking but an attitude. It depends, of course, upon a certain level of cognitive development but it may come unbidden, following certain experiences (such as distress), or when one is at peace. It is different from the three ordinary states of consciousness (waking, dreaming and sleeping) and is often described as a qualitatively state of 'restful alertness' (Alexander et al, 1990). Maslow (1970) describes such experiences as 'peak experiences' which, although inherently available to all, less than one in a thousand adults, including some of Robinson's (1977) respondents, seem to have. Such experiences are not an end-point of development - although the 'moment' of insight may come only once as suggested above - but rather an understanding of unity that is continually revisited.

The metaphor of a ladder to the sky has, in some ways, reflected Christian spiritual and moral development but it is important to see that the ladder 'leads' in two directions, both upward to God and downward from God, and that "the downward ladder is intended to get rid of an upward ladder" (Moran, 1987, p 7). The ladder metaphor may originally have depicted God's love flowing towards

humanity or divine descent into human form but the perspective easily shifted to invariant, sequential, hierarchical steps *up* a ladder towards God. I suggest that the metaphor of a ladder (implying ascent and stages) needs to be replaced by one of expanding circles (implying relationships) of consciousness or awareness as depicted by Carter (1987). Ideas of spiritual development should be based upon an increased awareness of the complexity and inter-relatedness of life in qualitative rather than stage terms, moving from simple to complex consciousness rather than from lower to higher cognitive stages or upwards towards increasingly pure thinking, feeling and behaviour.

Bearing these ideas in mind, let me move on to briefly discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of traditional stage thinking which have been applied to educational issues and involve ideas of moral and spiritual development.

### **ISSUES INVOLVED IN TRADITIONAL STAGE THINKING**

Although Piaget was unwilling to admit that his theory of stages of development had educational significance, it has been widely used to define goals and criteria and to specify content and levels of attainment. Since cognitive stages are assumed to form an invariant sequence, assessment methods usually consider which of the competencies of the next stage are already present in an attempt to reinforce their appearance. Although Goldman (1965) proposed the teaching of 'life themes' and 'religious themes' to tackle poor understanding of Christianity in religious education, his framework also included 6 hierarchical stages of cognitive and emotional development, each spanning two years.

The implications of viewing people in such a way means that comparisons can be made between, for example, mature and immature or normal and pathological humans. The categories 'immature' and 'pathological' are easier to define if normative stages and levels for the whole population exist and, in terms of

people's experience of bereavement, such terms are often used to describe responses deemed abnormal, unusual or troublesome. One issue in the conceptualizing of stages is the conflict in descriptions between abruptness and gradualism or discontinuity and continuity. Piagetian stage thinking which deems development to be characterized by sequential and qualitative change and discontinuity led Werner (1957) to postulate the orthogenetic principle that development involves 'emergence.' Although this is a useful way of picturing development, it is not, of course, how development of the child or young person is normally perceived by parents and teachers. It is usually only after a change has occurred that we are able to describe development in this way because then we take a long-term view, picking out salient features of change, and can see how development 'suddenly' happened.

A more accurate picture of development from a here-and-now viewpoint is of gradual, continuous, imperceptible change. Because such change is hard to see as it slowly occurs, this picture of development is less exciting since 'nothing' seems to be happening. Confusion or frustration may arise because people simultaneously display characteristics or competencies of different stages of development or appear to have forgotten the skills, attitudes or abilities they previously displayed. However, 'instant' examples of development sometimes occur which may be explained as recognition or insight - explained by Plato as 'recognition', and described by Reaney (1991, p 213) as discovering "what is already true."

Another issue in the use of stage descriptions of development is that they may be used to explain or predict present or future development rather than simply to describe change. Since development may be seen as a combination of both assimilation (addition of unchallenging material) and accommodation (readjustment to challenging material), both the urge to progress and the urge to conserve may be present in differing measures in different people. Apart from differences of temperament and personality which must be taken into account,

such descriptions are acceptable as long as they are only descriptions rather than explanations of development because the full reason why a child or young person learns something quickly or appears to grieve for years cannot be explained so easily.

As with moral and spiritual development, I suggest that notions of stages or phases of bereavement may also be unhelpful if promoted too thoroughly since adaptation to loss can take many forms. As I shall show in the next chapter, development (which includes adapting to losses throughout one's life) may not take as predictable a course as we would wish or imagine. Although we may impose an order on what we perceive to be happening - labelling emotions 'anger,' 'despair' etc and perceiving them to conform to nomothetic laws - our individuality allows a variety of responses which may not conform to expectations but which are, none the less, natural.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: BEREAVEMENT AND MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Introduction**

Ideas developed in previous chapters lead me to propose two complementary views of human development following bereavement: a general view which sees all bereavement outcomes as forms of development, and a specific view which recognizes that certain outcomes are traditionally perceived as moral or spiritual. The chapter considers stories and common-sense views of the outcome of bereavement; examples from life; variables affecting outcome and measures used to assess them; and the significance of perceiving bereavement, grief and grieving from a medical standpoint. As an alternative to psychoanalytic, attachment and transitional models I propose one of adaptation which reflects some ideas about development previously discussed.

### **Bereavement: stories and common-sense views**

'Your father's gone,' my bald headmaster said.  
His shiny dome and brown tobacco jar  
Splintered at once in tears. It wasn't grief.  
I cried for knowledge which was bitterer  
Than any grief. For there and then I knew  
That grief has uses - that a father dead  
Could bind the bully's fist a week or two;  
And then I cried for shame, then for relief.

Edward Lucie-Smith (1964) 'The lesson'

The poem cited above reflects the expectation that when death occurs people will take care of the bereaved because it is a difficult time for them and also suggests that even school bullies will grudgingly abide by such a code of moral behaviour. Other well-known stories from a variety of sources (eg: Cinderella, Batman, Hamlet) reveal common-sense views of the likely difficulties and outcomes of bereavement for children and young people to which we may consciously or subconsciously subscribe.

Cinderella's stepmother dominates and abuses her but she emerges uncomplaining and triumphant in adulthood - and ready, it should be noted, for marriage. Batman avenges the robbery and murder of his parents by assisting unknown defenceless people and inspiring fear in criminals. Hamlet, however, loses interest in his personal appearance, sport and books, becomes distrustful of his friends and possessive of Ophelia. Cinderella's essential self is not harmed by her ordeal but, rather, is refined to reveal strength and charm of character. Batman, however, becomes a solitary masked vigilante and Hamlet dies prematurely in a duel trying to avenge his father's murder. All three stories, reflect sexual stereotypes in response to moral trials: passivity and endurance in females in response to difficulties in interpersonal relationships; activity and destruction in males in trials of local, national or international importance.

Even in analysing these popular tales, however, it is important to remember that both development and grieving are processes that take time. We only see the first few months of Hamlet's bereavement, whereas Cinderella has been bereaved some time before her development from teenager to young woman is traced, and Batman has probably been bereaved for at least fifteen years when his story starts. Although it is easy to identify that the bereaved state begins when someone dies, it is much harder to say where the middle and the end of the grieving process are. In the latter cases, one may not think it was 'the middle' or 'the end' until afterwards and, as I shall show later in this chapter, it can be argued that there really is no 'end' since we never forget someone's death and continue our lives as before, completely unchanged. Even the act of remembering dead people constitutes a change in our lives because our memories of them were not usually considered 'finished' before they died - we expected to carry on our relationship with them. If nothing else, we have to adjust to the fact that that part of our life is over, that it can only be revived by memories, and that even those will fade and fail in time.

As well as recognizing that the grieving process continues over time, the type of death, the family circumstances and the age of the person also need considering. Batman witnessed the murder of his parents when he was about 10; Hamlet's father died suspiciously when he was a teenager; Cinderella's mother died when she was young, probably of illness or even in childbirth. For Cinderella, parental remarriage means living with older step-siblings and, for Hamlet, having an uncle become a step-father.

It is likely that witnessing a murder or discovering a suicide can cause more distress than finding people who died in their sleep. Also, due to a sense of age appropriateness, having a parent die may be more disturbing than having a grandparent die, and having a sibling die may be more disturbing than having a parent die. Losing a parent by death may mean a loss of nurture and order in the home, a drop in income or actually having to move home. Losing a sibling by death may affect family dynamics, perhaps forcing a child into a premature senior role, altering the dependency between parents and children or resulting in the birth of a new child by way of compensation. By contrast, losing a grandparent by death may have little impact, either because the grandparent lived at a distance or because the death occurred in hospital - a place often considered inappropriate for a child to visit. The loss by death of a pet is one of the most common experiences in childhood and is probably a good preparation for understanding the concept of death and experiencing more significant human deaths later in life. Focus on the nuclear family means that most western research has concentrated on the importance for a child or young person of the death of a parent or sibling, rather than, for example, the death of grandparent, cousin or pet.

There are many variables that are likely to affect the outcome of being bereaved as a child or young person - age, sex, position in the family, temperament, cognitive development, understanding of the concept of death, academic achievement and status, special interests and hobbies, disabilities, physical development, health, social behaviour, socio-economic status, social support

networks, religion, ethnicity, cultural background and existential beliefs - so that it seems difficult to draw any firm conclusions, and in fact, Kollar (1990, p 11) comments: "If everything depends on everything else, is there really any theory of grief?"

As well as difficulty in accounting for all variables, there has sometimes been a tendency in research literature to treat people who lose a parent - whether through death, divorce, separation, desertion, military service or hospitalization - as a homogenous group (Berlinsky and Biller, 1982). This approach fails to take into account that death, unlike other forms of separation, is final. For example, when parents divorce their children can hope for a reconciliation, although unlikely, but the features of death (irreversibility, universality and nonfunctionality: Speece and Brent, 1987) usually prevent such hope when a parent dies. In addition, until fairly recently there was a tendency to consider individuals in isolation from their families and to overlook the interdependency and rules of family systems. Such a family perspective acknowledges that any change in one part of the system (eg: death of father) will cause changes in the entire system such as new relationships between surviving family members.

### **Bereavement outcome and development: synonymous processes**

Despite the emphasis shown later in this chapter on identifying mainly negative behavioural outcome or psychological impairment in adulthood, I believe that a range of examples of moral and spiritual development *can* be found in the literature. I consider that development is a natural process and bereavement is a natural event but that notions of *normality* in development, whether moral or spiritual, and the process of grieving in responses to bereavement are socio-culturally constructed. In Britain the death of a child's parent may be considered 'abnormal' if the child is still at school but 'normal' if the 'child' is middle aged or older. Weeping and talking about the deceased are usually considered 'normal' behaviour but not depression or self harm. Two apparently contradictory

perspectives on human development give rise to this anomaly. Nomothetic laws, which hold that all humans are basically the same, expect broadly similar emotional, psychological and behavioural responses while the idiographic perspective acknowledges the existence of differences according to personality, culture, social context and connection to the deceased.

Grieving, like development, is an adaptive, coping process which may take an erratic route and I do not think that notions of 'returning to normal' describe what actually happens since, as I suggested in chapter 1, development involves growth and change and involves separation, differentiation, decline and decay as organisms live through time. Whether described as 'negative' or 'pathological', I propose that responses made to bereavement during the grieving process *are development*, even though they may contradict the established or accepted norm for emotional development, socio-conventional behaviour, religious belief and, as in the case of suicide, even transgress near-absolute moral boundaries. I take this view because I consider that any form of development - even the case of a cancer growth - is development, whether or not it is welcome and acceptable, either individually or socially.

If a form of behaviour or thinking or feeling *can* occur it must be natural because it *does* occur, although I recognize that some forms of development may require medical treatment or legal intervention to make them conform to medical or social norms which, as already stated, are culturally and socially defined in different periods and places. In cases where society deems certain forms of development to be 'negative,' norm description rather than criteria descriptions are usually applied and unwelcome occurrences are dismissed or negatively evaluated.

Moral and spiritual development related to death and bereavement may have surprising or unconventional outcomes because of the wide range of responses humans can make in adjusting to a changed worldview brought about by the death of a loved one. Views about oneself and the justness and orderliness of the

world need to be reaffirmed or revised and such views may include beliefs about how the universe works, the place and power of oneself in it, how to maintain links with the deceased, whether or not there is a God or divine power, what the meaning or purpose of life is, and what meaning can be found in the deceased's death (Klass, 1993a). Although each society has a sense of what is appropriate or normal development this does not *prevent* individuals developing in other ways. For example, the concept of an individual personal God within Judaism and Christianity encourages a more negative attitude to suicide than within Japanese society, and Shinto and Buddhist beliefs - unlike Judaeo-Christian thinking - consider that contact with deceased ancestors should be maintained by offering food at family altars. Thus, actions and behaviour "deemed aberrant, maladjusted or pathological in one cultural milieu may be fully acceptable in another" (Stroebe et al, 1992, p 1210).

In the two lists of forms of moral and spiritual development that I offer at the end of chapters 2 and 3 there is evidence of new thinking, exploration of emotions and changed behaviour. For example, socio-conventional beliefs and practices and the dominance of behaviour-focused morality are challenged, and difficult concepts such as pain, loss, suffering and mortality are explored, to which there may be no answers. Depression, just as much as creativity, can be considered to constitute development in response to the changes and challenges of life but since schools (and society, too) expect progress towards maturity in terms that are deemed positive, such depression is not usually considered 'good development' particularly in pupils.

### **Definitions of related concepts**

From time to time there is confusion in the literature because authors interchange the term 'bereavement' with 'grief' or grieving processes (Rodgers and Cowles, 1991) or use the term 'mourning' instead of 'grief' (eg: Freud, 1917; Pollock, 1987). 'Bereavement' refers to the state of a person who has lost someone

significant by death and is an indication of survivorship status. 'Grief' is the emotional response to that loss and 'grieving' is the process through which bereaved people pass. 'Mourning' describes the expression of grief which a culture endorses, whether individually or corporately, while 'loss' is a euphemism for the bereaved state which is sometimes useful since it accurately describes the feelings experienced in similar states (eg: lost possessions). However, the difficulty with using the word 'loss' springs from the fact that *something* that is lost may be found again whereas *someone* who is 'lost' cannot be found alive again.

The state of bereavement is normal and natural since it is a "choiceless event" (Attig, 1991) that usually occurs to everyone and cannot be planned. There is, however, no agreement on definitions of 'normal' grief (Rodgers and Cowles, 1991; Shuchter and Zissok, 1993) - although I have already suggested that all such forms are 'natural.' The intensity, duration or particular manifestations of some forms of grieving are variously described as abnormal, absent, atypical, distorted, morbid, maladaptive, pathological, truncated, unresolved, neurotic or dysfunctional (Middleton et al, 1993). Early research into childhood bereavement tended to focus on whether, because of their cognitive inability to understand what death meant, children could not grieve or did so abnormally, resulting in psychological impairment in adulthood. Despite many views to the contrary, I think it is important to state my belief that bereavement is a natural state, that grieving involves making active choices, and that grief is not a disease as Engel (1961) persuasively suggests.

I accept that grief "is 'natural' or 'normal' in the same sense that a wound or a burn are natural or normal responses to physical trauma" (Engel, p 19) and that, like these physical injuries, such ubiquitous effects are experienced by all humans because of our universal vulnerability. However, it is not clear what Engel is likening to disease. He calls it 'grief' but actually describes the grieving process (shock; a growing and painful awareness of loss; restitution), arguing that even uncomplicated grief represents a gross departure from the dynamic state

considered to represent well-being. Such a description implies a homeostatic model or 'recovery to a previous state of health' view which I later challenge in this chapter.

While it is important to recognise the disabling and disorienting effect that the bereaved state may cause, I think Engel's (1961) call for grief to become "a legitimate and proper study by medical scientists" (p 20) has been heeded rather too vigorously. Most current concepts of grief in the bereavement literature are still from within the discipline of medicine (Rodgers and Cowles, 1991) so that the prevailing model likens bereaved people to patients needing treatment for a disease, describes manifestations of grief as 'symptoms' or as 'resulting' in depression, crying and other disturbances, and sees the outcome as 'recovery' from pain and suffering. Our dependence upon health-care services probably prevents us from discovering our own qualities of self-renewal and testing the support of ordinary others (Jaffe, 1985) since before the medicalization of bereavement, 'psychosocial medicine' or "tender loving care" was administered by non-professional caregivers (Parkes, 1993, p 99).

The title of this study, which links *bereavement* with moral and spiritual development, may actually be misleading since any moral and spiritual outcome following the event of bereavement in a child or young person's life will develop during the *grieving process* (which also includes the formal period of mourning). This is the period when people make choices, whether acknowledged or not, about how to continue with their lives. The term 'bereavement' only describes the survivorship state of a person who experiences the (usually unchosen and unplanned) death of another human. It says nothing about the survivor's actual response to loss (Clark, 1990).

## **Psychoanalytic, attachment and transitional models of grieving**

An understanding of loss - whether through death or other means - and the internalization of lost objects is central to psychoanalytic theory. The 'talking cure' that Breuer used with 21 year-old Anna O, and which in time became the basis of psychoanalysis employed by Freud, was for symptoms arising during the nine months she had nursed her dying father. The death of Freud's own father precipitated an intense self-analysis and the formulation of the Oedipus complex (desire for mother and jealousy of father) described for the first time in The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) in which Freud described melancholia as a form of mourning (or grief) likely to occur if a bereaved child had desired the death of its parent.

Freud considered that mourning (normal grief) did not involve ambivalent feelings towards the deceased but that melancholia (pathological grief) did. The concept of grieving, whether 'normal' or 'pathological' has been further expounded, and many studies have attempted to analyse whether bereavement in childhood and the subsequent process of grieving have contributed towards maladjustment in adulthood. Berlinsky and Biller's (1982) review of 114 studies of parental death and psychological development identifies areas of frequent research. The largest group in their sample (61 studies) are empirical, mainly retrospective studies concerned with emotional disturbances such as depression, suicidal behaviour, schizophrenia and paranoid psychosis. Seventeen studies, mainly from a psychoanalytic perspective, are theoretical, concerned with immediate, rather than long term reactions in children; ten studies are concerned with personality; seven studies deal with delinquency and criminal behaviour; twelve studies analyse sex roles, sexual behaviour and marriage, and - by contrast - seven studies focus on creative, academic and cognitive achievements. Overall, there has been a tendency for both theoretical and empirical work to look for negative rather than positive outcome from bereavement in children and young people and,

although such research samples are small compared to the general population, they may have tended to give the impression that such outcomes are common.

As well as psychoanalysis, the literature about bereavement and grief has been influenced by attachment theory. Noting similarities between babies separated from their mothers and adults facing bereavement, Bowlby (eg: 1961) perceived grief to be an extension of a general response to separation (protest, despair, detachment) and the eventual goal of grieving as 'letting go' of a relationship that it is impossible to retain. In 1982 Bowlby concluded that most healthy people grieved longer than had often been suggested, particularly by psychoanalytic theory, and that responses usually deemed pathological such as anger, disbelief and searching for the lost person were quite common.

Psychoanalysis and attachment theory share a common assumption that the main work of grieving is to gradually detach emotionally from the deceased and such 'work' - often known as 'grief work' - consists of testing over time the reality of the loss. Worden's (1991) view of this 'work' as four tasks is a popular and useful one:

1. Accepting the reality of the loss and its implication. (Recognizing that searching is futile, ceasing to deny the death, moving and discarding the deceased's possessions.)
2. Experiencing the turmoil of grief rather than avoiding or short-cutting it. (Feeling pain, anger, guilt, and crying when necessary.)
3. Adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is physically missing. (Taking on new roles and learning new skills.)
4. Withdrawing emotional energy from and relocating the deceased sufficiently to allow involvement with other people. (Being willing to love, trust and risk again).

Although these may seem everyday activities, they indicate physical, cognitive and emotional adaptations which can be interpreted as moral and spiritual development. Task four, however, is increasingly open to criticism (Stroebe,

1992; Stroebe et al, 1992; Klass, 1993a; Marwit and Klass, 1995) since ties to the deceased are retained in many ways and, unless these are so obsessional as to be detrimental to other relationships, there seems no reason why they must be broken. (Discussion of this issue will follow later in this chapter.)

Both psychoanalysis and attachment theory have tended to see grieving as a time-limited process although the expected time course for 'normal' grieving has increased with the development of bereavement research. Current thinking considers that two years enables the death to be reality-tested by a range of anniversaries such as birthdays of the bereaved and the deceased, the death itself, Christmas, Easter and other family get-togethers (Worden, 1991; Stroebe et al, 1993) and, in line with this view, I tried not to interview or question any child, young person or adult bereaved of someone significant during the previous two years.

Parkes (1993) offers another viewpoint, suggesting that bereavement is one of life's psychosocial transitions (PST) which require major revisions of assumptions about the world, are lasting in their implications and take place, without any preparation, over a relatively short period of time. This view has increasing validity as medical care continues to preserve and extend life for all age groups so that death is often perceived as a failure of the medical system. The causes of death - currently defined as natural, accidental, suicidal or from murder - even subdivide 'natural' death into 'expected' or 'unexpected' categories. By contrast, normative transitions involve biological, psychological and socio-cultural factors which are usually expected, planned or chosen (eg: birth, initiation, marriage, childbirth, retirement). Despite our human ability to respond to change, and even to actively seek it, the stress of an unplanned life-changing event such as death may cause physiological reactions which, if viewed negatively, seem to precede illness (Arnette, 1996).

Theories of grief and grieving can be seen to fall into four approaches (Kollar, 1990) and, taken together, I think such an overview helps to explain some of the contradictions and ambiguities in the literature. First, when grief is seen as an emotional sickness to avoid, the focus is usually on ways of dealing with shock, pain and denial. This approach focuses on *grief as an emotion* and tends to emphasise the *beginning* of the grieving period. When the second view is held - that mature living includes grieving as the acknowledgement of inevitable loss - the emphasis is on acceptance of *psychological reality*. This approach is concerned with living without the deceased in the future and tends to focus on the *middle* of the grieving period. The third approach is also concerned with the *middle* of the grieving period and how the choices made then shape future outcomes. This view sees grieving as a *psychological process of growth*, often with an emphasis on grief and grieving as a rite of passage - that is, on acknowledging the significance of an experience that everyone goes through at some point in their lives. Fourth, when grieving is seen as a set of *developmental tasks* (eg: Worden, 1991), growth and development are emphasized. This approach perceives developmental tasks to be *ongoing* - without a beginning, middle or end - because, in meeting the challenges of living, these tasks continually overlap.

I do not think that any theory can fully explain 'normal' grief and grieving in a way that includes all possible outcomes. The 'grief work' hypothesis, previously described, assumes grieving will be slow and painful but cross-cultural, correlational and experimental studies do not support this view (Stroebe, 1992). While agreeing that 'grief work' (or grieving) may include negative emotions Stroebe suggests it is also

a cognitive process involving confrontation with and restructuring of thoughts about the deceased, the loss experience, and the changed world within which the bereaved must now live (p 33).

There is a growing recognition that bereavement theories have tended to focus on "the sudden death of a middle-aged white man" (Kollar, 1990, p 10) and

highlighted widows rather than any other group. Since this has meant that children's grieving is usually compared to that of adults and often termed 'abnormal' by contrast, I think that a holistic view is needed in order in future to address the differing 'realities' that people of all ages have of the experience of bereavement.

### **Grief and grieving and moral and spiritual development**

I consider that bereavement is a passive state and grief is a passive emotion. One cannot avoid being bereaved, through relationships or friendships, and the grief emotion which seems to overwhelm after such an event often feels impossible to avoid also (see chapter 1). Since the desire to restore the loss cannot be satisfied because the belief that it has occurred is true (Attig, 1991), the emotion grief may be considered irrational, and frustration often arises because nothing can be done to change what has happened. Such feelings make us feel the world is an unsafe place because habits of living that we have come to rely upon (that the deceased will be in our life) must be revised.

By contrast, I see grieving and mourning to be active processes, offering choices - sometimes frightening and sometimes exciting - and unknown outcomes. Mourning involves choosing how to interact with the corpse (whether or not to view or touch it), what kind of funeral service to arrange (what religious beliefs to endorse, whether to use flowers or hymns, what to wear), what to do immediately afterwards (whether to have a wake or party) and what to do in the long term (how long to wear any sign of mourning, how to publicly announce the event, how to mark the event on a formal or regular basis). Grieving is the personal response to many of the components of mourning - such as whether or not to cry during the funeral - and to philosophical and metaphysical questions which often arise when a living thing dies, such as questioning meaning and purpose in life, whether or not there is any form of life after physical death, and the nature and existence of God or a divine spirit. Other grieving choices are whether or not to indulge in or

struggle against the grief emotion; how and when to tackle many of the tasks that have to be done such as dealing with the deceased's possessions; which possessions to keep and how to discard of the rest; whether or not to visit places that have associations with the deceased; whether or not to express one's feelings through silence, withdrawal, prayer, talking, writing, painting, walking or sport; how to interact with other people and how to build a new relationship with the deceased (Attig, 1991).

Children and young people also have choices to make in this process, the most obvious practical one being whether or not to attend the funeral. Decisions are often made for them in this respect, though, and many who did not attend later wish they had. Other ongoing personal choices which everyone has to make, whether or not they attend the funeral, include how to remember and commemorate the deceased. Although it is possible that children and young people who do not attend a funeral may have unresolved feelings and memories which need addressing, working out how to incorporate thoughts about the deceased into one's life is something that everyone continually needs to do, whatever their age.

The emphasis within twentieth century bereavement theory on 'breaking bonds' with the deceased (Worden's fourth 'grief work' task) in order to carry on with life more efficiently contrasts with views held a century ago. Then the so-called romantic belief in the mysterious processes within oneself - considered to be the source of one's soul, of love, genius and creativity - encouraged the maintenance of bonds with the deceased as signifying the importance of love and relationships. The bereaved often strove to retain a sense of the deceased, dreamed of them, expected reunions in an afterlife, named children after them and sought their guidance and advice particularly through spiritualism (Stroebe et al, 1992). In this sense some of my respondents seem to reflect 'romantic' rather than contemporary bereavement theory thinking (see chapter 7).

How to interact with other people and build a new relationship with the deceased are significant examples of grieving choices because they represent rather evident examples of conventionally defined moral and spiritual development. Since interacting with other people cannot really be avoided if life is to continue in any meaningful way (although levels of intimacy can be regulated), how this is done while grieving is important. For example, the tiredness which often accompanies grief may make the bereaved person bad-tempered or unwilling to do anything. These changes may affect inter-personal relationships in the short term and even persist long term. Children may not understand why their surviving parent is grumpy and parents may not realise why their child is apathetic. A bereaved pupil may not have the energy to listen carefully in lessons and, if reprimanded by a teacher for inattention or poor work, may respond sullenly.

Building a new relationship with the deceased, however, is unlike maintaining or rebuilding relationships with one's family and friends. The physical absence of the deceased forces new ways of communication and ways of remembering and, when bereaved people use these ways to maintain a sense of the deceased in their current lives, it is probably easier for the finality of the loss to be accepted (Doka, 1993; Silverman and Worden, 1993). Bereaved people often accomplish this by maintaining interaction with an inner representation of the deceased through possessions, photographs, clothing, and keepsakes, through activities such as visiting the grave or memorial place and through prayer, dreams and having a sense of the deceased being with or watching them. Inner representations may be maintained when aspects of the self are felt to be in interaction with the deceased, or when the bereaved hold on to memories of or recognize emotional states associated with the deceased (Klass, 1993b). Dreams may be ways of reviving memories in new creative forms and common forms of dreaming are talking about the death with the deceased, reliving the dying process, receiving advice or instructions and saying a final farewell (Cookson, 1990; Barrett, 1992).

Klass (1993b) found that bereaved *parents* maintained their interaction with their dead children through a sense of presence, hallucinations in any of the senses, belief in the child's continuing active influence on thoughts or events, and a conscious incorporation of their characteristics or virtues. Hogan and DeSantis (1992) found that bereaved *siblings* maintain an ongoing attachment to their dead brother or sister by longing to share activities with them; wanting to catch up on news, to know if the deceased is happy, and to know what heaven (or wherever they are) is like; feeling the deceased guiding them, and expecting to be reunited with them. Silverman and Worden (1993) found that bereaved *children* maintain their interaction with deceased parents through dreams, talking to them, feeling that they are watching them, keeping personal items, visiting the grave and frequently thinking about them. In Kremetz's (1991) classic account of eighteen *children and teenagers* bereaved of a parent, ten mention maintaining a connection in some of these ways also, four of which are as follows.

Sometimes I ride him [father's horse] in horse shows and I always try my best for my father. I think that if I ride him especially well, maybe my dad can see me - or something (p 59). (Girl aged 10: bereaved one year)

I realized that ... the real person, the person I loved who was Mum, was somewhere else and would never die. Her spirit was part of me and part of all of us (p 71). (Boy aged 16: bereaved four years)

I can still remember my mother vividly. I can hear her voice and I can still remember how she reacted to things I did. (p 54). (Boy aged 15: bereaved six years)

... when I went to temple for my Bas Mitzvah there were a lot of times when I just felt my mother was there, supporting me and helping me. Every now and then - it just lasted a second, but I felt she was there. Occasionally I have dreams about her.. ... I do think that my mother can see me. Not always - it's just at certain times that I think she's watching me" (pp 20-1). (Girl aged 13: bereaved seven years)

Such methods provide solace - a source of comfort in a changed situation and a blending of inner and outer reality (Klass, 1993b) - and these ways of staying in touch are undoubtedly valuable. However, as Silverman and Worden (1993, p 314, my italics) note:

These behaviours have frequently been labeled as 'preoccupations with the deceased.' This term implies symptomatic behaviour that should end. Most of the descriptions of this phenomenon have been based on clinical observations ... and this may have influenced the conclusion that in grief work

it is necessary to disengage from the deceased. *This conclusion did not seem consistent with the reality we observed.*

It seems, therefore, that previously held notions of pathological grieving may be vital physical, cognitive and emotional adaptations to death and loss which can be defined in moral and spiritual terms. In order to further explore the notion that whatever occurs is natural development, whether or not it is normal (expected and accepted) or abnormal (unexpected and unacceptable), I want to consider some rather less well documented outcomes, such as the links between proficiency and creativity, depression and self-harm within eminent people who were bereaved in childhood.

### **Bereavement: examples from life**

Intrigued by theories of hereditary principles and links between psychoses and moral degeneracy, Eisenstadt (1978) compiled a list of 573 eminent people bereaved of a parent in childhood including writers, philosophers, scientists, statesmen, royalty, founders, soldiers, artists, reformers, composers and explorers from antiquity to the twentieth century, although mostly from the nineteenth century. He concluded that death of a parent by age ten was markedly greater among the eminent subjects than the 1921 census sample for England and Wales - although it is important to be aware of life expectancy differences across time and between cultures and countries.

There are many reasons why parental bereavement might lead to a changed lifestyle. Children may take on increased responsibility in the family, adopt a new role, seek a new parent role model or idealize the deceased parent and attempt to copy or exceed his or her standards. They may also desire to control their own destiny, to excel intellectually, or to overcome feelings of insecurity, unhappiness or guilt. Such desires can become sources of compensatory energy and encourage a ruthless or determined attitude to life. Many bereaved children and young people may experience a sense of moral injustice because God, fate or

destiny selected them - but not their peers - for the death of a loved one which, in turn, may engender the capacity to endure a self-punishing routine that other people might abandon (Eisenstadt, 1978).

Some people may develop their imaginative capacities as compensation for the absence of intimate relationships with family members. By creating a new poem or other work of art which has a concrete presence in the world, a lost unity may be restored or a new unity found within oneself. Thus the gap between the external world of reality and an individual's inner world is bridged (Storr, 1989). Since creative people are often used to or need solitude to work, bereaved children may have an advantage in having had to cope with being left alone, either physically or psychologically, at significant times in their lives. Writing, painting or shaping a product is one practical way of overcoming feelings of helplessness - which a bereavement in childhood may well engender - or of overcoming anger at feeling abandoned.

It may be that the greater the disharmony within - whether caused by bereavement, mental instability or some other form of stress - "the sharper the spur to seek harmony, or, if one has the gifts, to *create* harmony" (Storr, p 132). For example, Sylvia Plath had such abilities and used them to describe her inner world and, apparently, to predict her own suicide. She was a child prodigy and published her first poem when she was eight, a year before her father died. Although an outstanding student, she attempted suicide at 19/20 years and again at 29/30 years when married with two children. In 'Daddy' (1962) she seems to explain why.

I was ten when they buried you.  
At twenty I tried to die  
And get back, back, back to you.  
I thought even the bones would do.

Another writer whose work seems to express inner turmoil is Friedrich Nietzsche, although it is less explicitly expressed. Friedrich's father, a capable musician, punished his son for displays of emotion which the child learnt to avoid by

retreating into solitude. His father became mentally ill when Nietzsche was three and died when he was four, just before Nietzsche's two-year old brother also died. Grief at the loss of his father and anger and puzzlement at the way he was forced in childhood by his female relatives to observe extreme notions of Christian virtues (self-discipline, neighbourly love and compassion) later seemed to encourage clever written attacks on abstract concepts such as Christianity, middle-class values and 'the nature of woman' (Miller, 1990).

It appears that Plath grieved for the loss of the *relationship* with her father while Nietzsche grieved for the *changed circumstances* preceding his father's death and the kind of life he led afterwards.

Eisenstadt's (1978) sample of eminent people bereaved in childhood contains 679 men and 20 women, and Storr (1989) cites 8 male writers and 1 female writer bereaved before they were 12 who suffered from depression and/or committed suicide. This disparity in samples of men and women, arising from men's greater access to public life, may also reflect more rigorous public social norms for men, for whom acts of suicide and moods of depression are considered emasculating. The greater secrecy and seclusion of women's lives throughout most of history makes it difficult to evaluate how eminent they might have been if they had had equal access to education and property or to know if depression and suicide were more or less common in women than in men.

It may be helpful to hypothesise some of the ways that the grieving process, depression and creativity inter-relate. It is likely that the death of someone - especially of a loved one - forces immediate instability into people's lives. Apart from the absence of the deceased, routines change, rooms and clothes are left in disorder, people visit or come to stay and even if a funeral is not attended for the first time, it is attended in a new role related to the deceased (eg: as fatherless or motherless orphan). The stability to balance this is often sought in familiar routines at school or work or in careful attention to tasks involving detailed

examination, such as sorting or cataloguing, which give a sense of regaining control in some area of life. Since creativity often involves sustaining disorder such as tolerating open books or paints, piles of paper, unfinished sketches or drafts of ideas and keeping irregular hours, the similarity between events following a death and creative work may be too painful to contemplate, and despair may result. However, one success may parallel another and the production of a tangible acclaimed product can encourage new progress in the grieving process.

The difficulty of establishing boundaries between insanity and genius is well known (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1994) and those between insanity and mystical or religious experiences have also been seen as problematic (Hay, 1990) due to conflicting and interlinking reasons. A diagnosis of insanity or physical illness may be given to culturally unusual beliefs which prompt unsociable behaviour, or to hallucinations, visions or mystical experiences that fall outside the norm for the socio-cultural context in which they occur but one particular difficulty in assessing religious experiences is that comparisons are often made across time and cultures and that definitions of insanity and notions of such things as alcoholism, genius or depression alter over a period of time. Overall, there seems to be no support for the suggestion that religiousness is necessarily correlated to psychopathology (Bergin, 1983).

It is apparent from examples in life that only *some* people who are bereaved when young become eminent through creativity (eg: Charlotte Bronte), that only *some* people seem to find life thereafter intolerable and commit suicide (eg: John Berryman), that only *some* people suffer from bouts of depression (eg: William Cowper), and that others - such as stereotypical Cinderella and millions of other unnamed people - quietly move on in life, their development unremarked. These differences may be due to personality and qualities of character such as hardiness (Campbell et al, 1991) or an ability to transform the situation and share it positively with others (Jaffe, 1985) rather than the mere event of the death itself.

The recognition that people respond differently reinforces my suggestion that whatever develops *is* development, whether it is perceived as healthy or unhealthy, and the many variables likely to affect development after bereavement will be explored next.

### **Bereavement of children and young people: variables, measures and outcomes**

As well as the factors already mentioned, some practical and concrete factors associated with bereavement - especially when a parent or sibling dies - include having new living arrangements; moving home or to a new area; moving away from friends, relatives and school; and experiencing a change in standard of living.

#### ***Parental death***

The death of a parent in childhood has attracted most research, mainly focusing on aberrant reactions, either short-term (after months or a few years) or long-term (adulthood). These include psychiatric disorders (Rutter, 1966), mental illness (Birchneil, 1970), suicide ideation (Adam et al, 1982), dysphoria, mild depression, bedwetting (Van Eerdewegh et al, 1982), personality (Furman, 1983), poor mothering (Zall, 1994) alcoholism, schizophrenia, homosexuality, neuroses (Finkelstein, 1988) and depression (Weller et al, 1991). By contrast, Kremetz (1991), Garber (1983), Cragg and Berman (1990) and Abrams (1992) break important new ground by presenting autobiographical accounts or research findings from 'normal' young people who are not part of a medical or psychiatric population in which there is evidence of development that I will describe as moral or spiritual.

Abrams (1992) recounts her reactions towards other people, including the deceased: bad-temper towards her step-father ("How dare he be alive at all and

my dad dead," p 19); anger at pupils at school ("Why should I have to make allowances for them, when they should have been making allowances for me?" p 11); astonishment at her English teacher's request that she reread aloud a poem about death ("Had he intended it as a way of acknowledging what had happened to me?" p 12) and fury with her father for having died and hurt her. She also reviews how she learnt to relate to the absence of her father in her life, which reiterates the importance of building a new relationship with the deceased.

In the first few years after my father's death, I had the disturbing experience of somehow having him in me, of carrying him in an almost physical sense inside me, so that at times it was as if I were 'being him'. ... His presence inside me was sad and burdensome, as well as wanted. But as the years have passed, the sense of him as a physical presence has worn off; I no longer feel I have to carry him inside me in order to keep him alive, but can find comfort from the memory of him inside me instead. ... it is no longer a burdensome presence inside me, but rather a comfortable space, like a little private meeting place to go to when I want to be with him(p 245).

### ***Sibling death***

Sibling death has been less frequently considered and it may be this lack that has prompted 'The Compassionate Friends' to produce SIBBS, a magazine in which bereaved siblings (and sometimes cousins and friends) of all ages share their reactions and feelings with each other. One sister wrote (1992, p 12):

Losing my brother has changed me. I am now most definitely a different person. Coping with such a loss is by no means a non-event. One thing I have learnt to recognise is that life is so short, you never know what is round the corner.

Sibling death has been considered from the point of view of reactions such as self concept (Balk, 1983), emotional over-investment in the family (Mufson, 1985), psychological, familial and social prohibitions against grieving or mourning (Rosen, 1985), withdrawal, physical symptoms, anger and denial (Deveau, 1990), and aggression (McCown and Davies, 1995). Factors affecting outcome are considered to be opportunities to share in family grieving and experiencing a sense of self-value (Davies, 1990). Balk (1983) found that 33 bereaved siblings who compared themselves before and after the death perceived themselves as 'more grown up,' able to value each day and its potential more, and able to accept

that some severe things have to be accepted because they cannot be altered. At the time of the interview (4-84 months after the death) 29 of the 33 said religion was now important to them, 27 confessed that religion had helped them accept the death and about half of them reported moments when they thought they had seen or heard their dead sibling. Balk (1991) also contends that coping with a sibling's death impels a young person sooner than nonaffected peers into forms of greater maturity such as cognitive development, social reasoning, moral judgement, identity formation and religious understanding.

### ***Peer death***

The death of a peer is increasingly being seen as significant, especially since research has revealed the extent of post-traumatic stress disorder following disasters such as Hillsborough, 'Jupiter', and the 'Herald of Free Enterprise' (Yule and Gold, 1993). Schachter (1991) found that 87% of a sample of 68 13-19 year-olds had experienced the death of a peer and, because of the experience, the three most frequent examples of changed behaviour were: becoming closer to friends, sharing feelings more freely and taking time to tell people you care. One 19 year-old female whose friend committed suicide wrote: "I am now more observant of people's behaviour and I listen more carefully to what they have to say" (p 10).

Probably because of the apparently shocking implications of someone young taking their own life, aspects of youth suicide - preoccupation with death (Pfeffer, 1990), development of the concept (Clark, 1992), prevention (Stevenson, 1990; Sullivan, 1990); postvention (Wenckstern and Leenars, 1993) and survivor grieving (Valente et al, 1988) - have been increasingly considered.

### ***Pupil and teacher death***

The significance of bereavement regarding a pupil's academic work, behavioural and emotional reactions is becoming more widely recognised by British educators (Barnes, 1986; Hufton, 1986; Leaman, 1994; Gisborne, 1995) and counsellors

(Goldacre, 1985; Arch, 1986; Davies, 1987; Quarmby, 1993), and guidelines to prepare for the event of death are now available for schools (Yule and Gold, 1993).

The death of headteacher Philip Lawrence in a knife attack in December 1995 highlighted the kind of risk situations in which many teachers unwittingly place themselves in order to protect their pupils (Charter, 1995). In addition, awareness of the trauma caused by particular forms of death such as suicide or murder of one parent by another may involve specialist social workers (Pennells and Smith, 1994) and psychologists (Black and Urbanowicz, 1987; Black and Kaplan, 1993; Black, 1995) working with bereaved children.

In the light of this, it is useful to examine some of the current debate concerning 'normal' adjustment to bereavement since, as I have said earlier in this thesis, bereavement happens to everyone at some time and most people do not seem to react 'abnormally' to it.

### **Reconsideration of established grief theories**

One becomes aware that assumptions of health and adjustment are by-products of cultural and historical processes. Similarly, one realizes that theories of personal deficit harbour implicit systems of value, favouring certain ideals over others. (Stroebe et al, 1992, p 1211)

Wortman and Silver (1989) and Stroebe et al (1994) debate five assumptions that bereavement research has engendered: the inevitability of distress and depression in grief; the necessity of experiencing distress; the importance of working through loss; the expectation of 'recovery,' and the 'resolution' of grief. Although the conclusions drawn by Stroebe et al given below were made with adults mainly in mind, they are also significant for this thesis regarding bereaved children and young people who will, of course, grow up to become adults.

- Most (but not all) bereaved people are distressed in the immediate aftermath of death but only a minority suffer from extreme or clinical levels of depression.

- Absence of distress is not unconditionally accepted as indicative of pathology.
- The hypothesis that it is always beneficial to 'work through' grief needs re-examining.
- The majority of people actively grieve for less time than a minority but the latter are not necessarily suffering from 'chronic' grief.
- The term 'resolution' is ambiguous since it implies that an ending in cognitive and emotional terms has been reached.

There is also increasing recognition in the literature that death affects not only the individual most immediately identified (eg: widow or widower) but all family members (especially children); that it is unhelpful to interpret grief as a form of "mental or physical illness or debility, or as a matter of clinical concern alone" (Stroebe et al, 1993, p 458) and that grief (or grieving) "is not a simple, universal process, with a progression of fixed stages, each with its typical symptoms" (p 462).

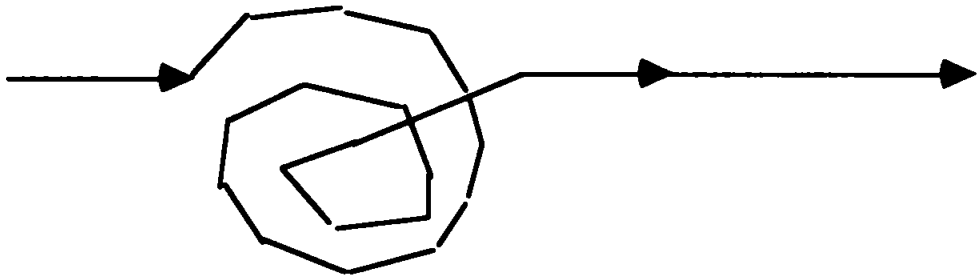
Thus the psychoanalytic-medical model is beginning to seem narrow and inappropriate and the attachment model may, in time, also prove inadequate. As explained earlier, the familiar homeostatic view espoused by both theories is of grief and grieving as stress which interrupts people's normal lives until an 'appropriate passage of time' allows them to return to previous patterns of social adjustment. This view, however, fails to recognise that loss and death have individual and powerful meanings for bereaved people and that they may have untapped personal potential with which to respond (Lieberman, 1993). For example, some people favour cognitive and behavioural strategies (eg: making a plan and carrying it out) while others prefer emotion-focused strategies (eg: assessing the support received from other people) (Stevens et al, 1987).

Apart from practical issues associated with a death, bereaved people also have to deal with questions about existence: "finitude, freedom and responsibility, isolation, and meaning in life" (Lieberman, 1993, p 420). Since the process of

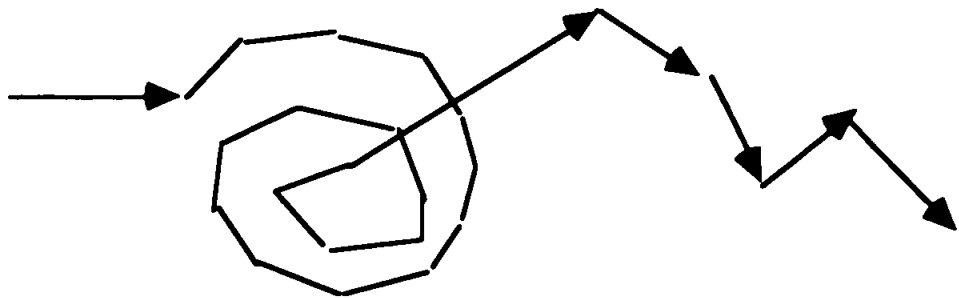
grieving involves adapting to and coping with the loss, it seems inappropriate to continue to try to measure a 'return to baseline' or a return to a pre-bereavement state according to an equilibrium model (Stroebe et al, 1993) and better to note the many ways in which such adaptation occurs. I think one of the ways to explore development in response to bereavement is in terms of short, medium and long-term 'adaptation' rather than 'recovery.'

The diagrams below may indicate the significance of this viewpoint.

**Figure 5. 1** Equilibrium or 'return to baseline' model



**Figure 5. 2** Adaptation model: short, medium and longer term change



This approach also challenges the usefulness of comparing bereaved with non-bereaved people because almost no-one is ever truly 'non-bereaved.' As soon as a child or young person experiences bereavement (whether of pet, grandparent, relative or neighbour), the adaptation process of coping and reshaping one's view of life, living and death begins.

As the adaptation model suggests, there are likely to be changes in lifestyle and thinking resulting from the grieving process, some of which will be to do with gains, however small, that arise in any loss situation. Although a bereaved ten-year old may feel that the loss of her mother is mainly bad, she may secretly recognise that the increased time she can now spend with her father is enjoyable. A bereaved sixteen-year old may feel that his father's death is awful for him and his mother for both financial and emotional reasons but be inwardly glad that the months of sickness are over. A girl may miss her deceased elder sister but look forward to family life returning to normal and to moving into the bigger bedroom her sister had. In each of these reactions there may be elements of moral guilt such as relief at the death, smugness at surviving, or pleasure in renewed family life which can result in fear of divine retribution or punishment from the deceased in some form.

### **Immortality and meaning, purpose and value in life**

... to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering. If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and dying.  
(Frankl, 1962, p xi)

Although death is a natural necessity for all living things, monotheistic religions in particular have resisted accepting this view by claiming that humanity is partially exempt from mortality. Because the bereaved need to relocate the dead somewhere else, where that 'place' is may reveal the extent of orthodox religious beliefs, particularly related to immortality and a sense of the meaning, purpose and value in or of life - whether for the deceased, the bereaved or all humanity.

I see a distinction between purpose (or meaning) *in* life and meaning *of* life which mainly rests upon whether or not the bereaved believe in an afterlife or immortality. For those who have a sense of a divine plan and believe that all human activity has significance as part of that plan (although imperfectly understood), death and human striving have a meaning that will be best understood only after death. In this sense death is a necessary pathway to gaining knowledge of things that cannot be fully understood here since "we see through a glass, darkly" (1 Corinthians, 13: 12, KJV). For such people the meaning *of* life is a cosmic one including both this life, death and the next (or continuing) life, and their perception of order and purpose in nature may also reflect a need to see all life and death as part of a divine plan.

For those who do not hold a belief in a divine plan (and may even believe that such a thing is insulting), meaning (or purpose) *in* life is possible in a terrestrial sense. Contemporary western naturalistic secular views tend to see death as part of the process of nature, altering but not stopping the direction of its living elements in an apparently endless series of recombinations (Irion, 1993). This view allows us to recognise that, as humans, we are dying all the time, and that we begin to die from our moment of birth. If nature is not regarded as personal, conscious and active (eg: Mother Nature), no moral meaning can be attributed to death, suffering and pain. Without either a divine plan or overall (though hidden) purpose as to why there is something rather than nothing or a belief that God chooses when to 'call' people from this life, individuals have the opportunity to make meaning for themselves. From this perspective death and human striving can have a meaning and a purpose which it is possible to understand while alive, and such meaning-making is often to be found in terms of happiness, relationships, love, friendship, service for others and enjoyment of living.

Meaning in life, which is individual, fluid and changeable over the lifespan, encourages a sense of personal identity, direction in life and confidence in an ability to cope, although these skills may be challenged or immobilised by the

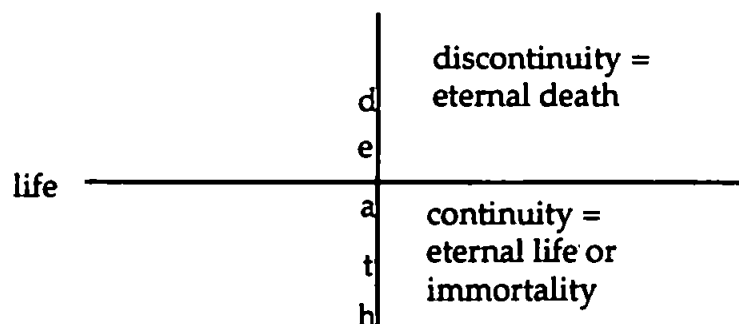
death of a loved one (Ulmer et al, 1991) because involvement in and commitment to relationships - which is one of the highest forms of human achievement (see chapter 1) - entails sorrow when such joyful relationships are lost.

Having faith in the future - and believing that there *will* be a future - enables even those in the most appalling circumstances to survive (Frankl, 1962). It also enables humans in more ordinary circumstances to live without anxiety about death while acknowledging that it is a certain but unknowable event for them until it happens. This faith may derive from symbolic forms of immortality (Lifton and Olson, 1974) which, while acknowledging that death is final, give a sense of connection with the future beyond our present individual lives. These forms include having a sense of continuity through children and family; creating and influencing (eg: teaching, writing, inventing, constructing); uniting with nature (enjoying and caring for it while alive and returning to it, reconstituted, when dead); and transcending the present moment or living it to the full (eg: through sex, music, childbirth, physical activity).

Some people imply that being bereaved is 'a terrible thing' - especially if it is experienced by a child or young person - but from the point of view of understanding either the meaning of life or perceiving meaning in life, it is necessary to ask: What it is that death represents? As suggested by the diagram below, death (which must be eternal death since it lasts forever) may represent either:

- discontinuity: the opposite or absence of life; the loss of the capacity to reflect and communicate; something that is not experienceable and is not something *in* life, or
- continuity: its extension into eternal life and the continuation of reflection, communication, experience, memory etc.

**Figure 5. 3 Death as discontinuity and continuity**



Christianity seems to claim that death is to be welcomed because it leads to eternal life and that the bereaved should rejoice rather than grieve because the deceased are 'alive' elsewhere. If there is an afterlife some people reason that death is a preferable state to life because it leads us to our teleological end.

However, other people state that, even if there is an afterlife, this life is preferable to death not only for the fact of it leading to immortality but because of what we would learn while living this life about the purpose and meaning of our whole life, both before and after death. On the other hand, it can also be argued that even if there is no afterlife, death would be preferable to life since, without eternal life, the chance is removed of receiving an explanation in eternity for both life and death and the purpose and meaning of this life. In other words, without eternal life to *explain* life and death, life itself becomes meaningless and so death becomes a far preferable state than living a meaningless existence (Levine, 1987).

Overall, the view that 'life makes sense' because 'it all fits together somehow' or that 'life must make sense for it to have meaning' is a western one which sees life as a line going somewhere because it has a purpose to achieve (as I drew above). 'Why do we suffer?' and 'Why do we die?' are questions that look for a personal answer involving love, responsibility, value or some similar concept (Kollar, 1993). Although there is no way of knowing 'how it all fits together' (which is a similar problem to understanding exactly how the death of Jesus on the cross

saved all the people in the world from sin and death), this approach is acceptable because it hints at a broader, deeper answer than humanity can ever know in this life and gives a certainty that there *is* an answer in the next life. Such an approach may even take away the fear of death because death is seen as the doorway to fuller knowledge and understanding.

Apart from this teleological perspective, three other common approaches to understanding suffering and death are: existential, fatalistic and nihilistic. The first approach considers life to be absurd and that no answer can ever be given about the future because all we know is the here and now. "We simply exist - for nothing - and any values or meaning we encounter are of human construction" (Thompson, 1995, p 504). In response to the question 'Why did he die?' this perspective usually answers: There is no reason; life doesn't make sense.

The second, fatalistic view accepts that the cause of suffering and death involves a balance of give-and-take. Reasons given for suffering are pragmatic: 'The people suffered because they were caught in a war' or 'She died of a cancer that couldn't be cured.' From this perspective life is seen as "an interlocking network of relationships which, when broken, cause suffering and death" (Kollar, 1993, p 154) and death itself is perceived to be from natural causes.

The third approach, which sees suffering to be caused by attachment to transient things of this world that can be lost, considers that only intangible things are real and everlasting (eg: soul, self, God). Not accepting suffering as part of reality reduces its significance and holders of this viewpoint believe that their 'real self' cannot suffer. To enter such a state is to go beyond the transience of this world into a near death-like state in which past, present and future are the same (Kollar, 1993).

If death is the absence of life, however, it is not possible to gain inside knowledge of the experience and it might be wise not to take up any ultimate position.

Perhaps we should remain open to all possibilities, unwilling to claim that death attains anything or leads anywhere, and neither fearing this life nor hoping for an afterlife (Kenyon, 1990). Numerous myths and stories abound in all cultures exploring the pervasiveness and origins of death and although all religions offer an explanation for it, there can never be any empirical evidence that they are correct. Perhaps it is because death defies knowledge that it is frequently described poetically and metaphorically.

### **Reconsideration of positive and negative outcomes**

As already indicated, despite the experience of something positive as a result of death, most research on bereaved children and young people has focused on negative outcome such as psychological distress. This is probably because the psychoanalytic-medical model has tended to link grief with disease and because attachment theory presupposes a degree of stress when separation occurs. Although grief emotion is similar to some incapacitating diseases and pain is usual when a loss occurs, the grieving process involves emotional, cognitive and physical reconstruction which can also generate creativity (Eisenstadt, 1978), achievement (Storr, 1989), change (Simos, 1979) and personal growth (Edmonds and Hooker, 1992).

Key themes among Eisenstadt's (1978) suggestions why bereavement may have a positive outcome are ruthlessness, relentlessness, self-improvement and autonomy. Since this psychological striving to succeed concerns self prevailing over other people (I-it) rather than self relating to other people (I-thou), it may seem morally selfish. However, it may also encourage an awareness of one's "inner space" (Hay, 1987) which, as I have indicated, is a necessary step in spiritual development. An understanding of one's own needs and capacities can lead to an appreciation of those of other people and, in turn, generate a desire to promote their well-being. It should be remembered that Eisenstadt's sample

includes not only 64 soldiers and 177 statesmen (whose activities may be considered selfish and oppressive) but also 38 reformers and 65 founders.

Other positive outcomes from the loss by death of someone close may be of an inter-personal or existential nature. In interviews with bereaved *adults*, Kessler (1987) identified six positive attitudes in personal growth: caring more about loving relationships with friends and family; accepting personal mortality and the transience of human existence; savouring the present moment; investing in the future; taking more responsibility, and feeling freer to risk new ways of living.

Oltjenbruns (1991) found that bereaved college *students* described positive outcomes as: a deeper appreciation of life; greater caring for loved ones; strengthening of emotional bonds with others, developed emotional strength; increased empathy for others; better communication skills and enhanced problem solving skills.

Several of Kremetz's (1991) *children and teenagers* also mentioned these outcomes.

The thing about losing a mother is that now I know I can take just about anything. It was so painful, but I survived the loss and it's made me a stronger person (p 27). (Boy aged 15)

I suppose my mother's death has probably made me more independent. I just have to rely on myself more (p 105). (Boy aged 15)

I was only eleven at the time, but I grew up real fast. I learned how to use the trains because I had to go visit my mother in the hospital (p 44). (Girl aged 16)

I used to be a real worrywart and worry that I was going to die. But now I realise that the most important thing is to have fun (p 98). (Girl aged 9)

Research previously cited by Kessler (1987), Oltjenbruns (1991) and Kremetz (1991) suggests that the experience of bereavement can sharpen an awareness of three areas of moral and spiritual development:

- **Self and one's capacities:** independence, strength of character, maturity, self-assertion, ruthlessness, responsibility, personality, sense of personal

worth, control of destiny, intellectual excellence, mastering of feelings and emotional strength (area 1 in Carter's overview below).

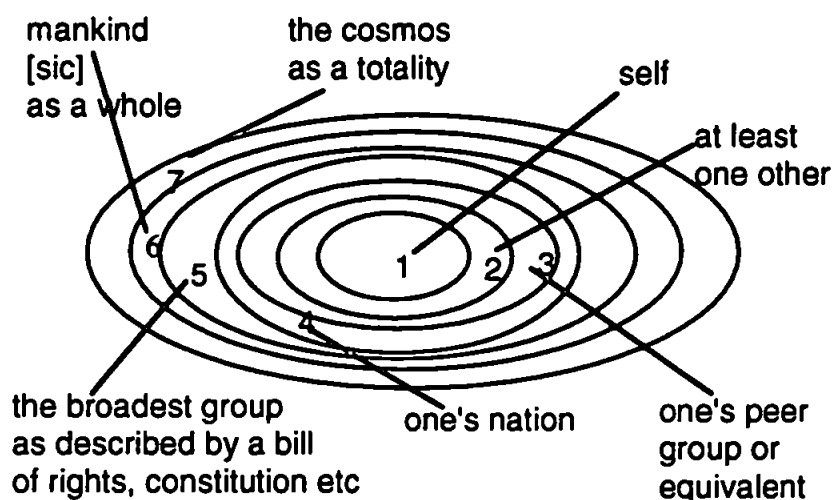
- **Other people's needs and capacities, individually and corporately:** caring, empathy, emotional bonds, communication skills and problem-solving (areas 2 and 3, and perhaps 4, 5 and 6).
- **Existential perspectives on living:** enjoyment of living, desire to have fun, appreciation of life, savouring of the present moment, transience of human life, sense of personal mortality, investment in future and freedom to risk (area 7).

These three areas can be identified in Kohlberg's moral development theory when the hypothetical stage seven is added as an overall unifying factor (see chapter 4). Stage seven, which gives a cosmic perspective on life in order to answer the perennial question: 'Why be moral?' and the subsequent ontological question: 'Why live?' (Kohlberg and Ryncarz, 1990) is described by Kohlberg (1984, p 249)

as:

a high soft stage in the development of ethical and religious orientations, orientations which are larger in scope than the justice orientations which our hard stages address.

**Figure 5.4** Awareness of inter-connecting human and cosmic relationships



An individual's moral journey - seen as an increasing awareness of one's relation to other people, beginning with a small group, a larger group and then all human beings - finally brings her or him to a point where the question: 'Why do I care about my neighbour or even about the cosmos?' must be answered by: 'Because

you, too, are a part of the cosmos' (Carter, 1987, p 91). I suggest that a bereavement experience encourages such development because of the personal, inter-personal and existential questions that it raises. Relocating the deceased involves cognitively moving him or her from area 2 to area 7, whether conceived of as in heaven, in eternity, within oneself, omnipresent or transformed into molecules and atoms. Since all humans experience bereavement, such cognitive relocating may be an unacknowledged but vital requirement of moral and spiritual development that Kohlberg (and others) have not considered since a stage seven perspective does not appear in adulthood without preparation. It is slowly developed throughout a person's life by a range of loss and death experiences, each one contributing by its individual nature to broader and deeper insights.

Worden's (1991) four tasks described earlier indicating physical, cognitive and emotional adaptations can be analysed in terms of moral and spiritual development discussed in previous chapters - although I do not claim that the following discussion is a definitive assessment. It is also important to add that these tasks are not linear, although 1, 2 and 3 will probably precede 4.

### **1. Accepting the reality of the death**

This task may involve a struggle between denial and realisation of what has occurred as helplessness, anger, guilt, shame and disbelief are processed. There will probably be issues of truth-telling, honesty and of abiding by consequential or deontological principles. The task may also explore the essential human need for and to be able to express love, relatedness and sadness, and to explore personal discernment and awareness.

### **2. Experiencing the pain of grief**

Whether experienced psychologically (eg: yearning) or physiologically (eg: weeping), this task may involve the expression or suppression of emotions together with any repercussions from strained or improved relationships. There may also be a sense of spiritual change arising from the power of shock or trauma

to transform the self when unknown, perhaps unpleasant parts of oneself are faced or when people feel they can control or influence the events of their lives and take action in order to transcend their situation.

### **3. Adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is physically missing**

This task will probably involve acquiring new roles, tasks and skills which challenge or enhance an individual's sense of worth. Finding ways to remember the missing person may involve rekindling memories, treasuring keepsakes, and sensing or believing in the continued presence of the deceased.

### **4. Withdrawing emotional energy from and relocating the deceased and reinvesting in life and other relationships**

This task will probably involve formulating a belief about where the deceased is now, according to either traditional religious and philosophical ideas or other naturalistic secular beliefs. It may involve questioning and making sense of the meaning of life and/or finding a meaning in life, valuing life, other people and, perhaps, finding practical ways to serve or support other people - especially those less fortunate than oneself. It is likely to involve maintaining, rather than breaking, bonds with the deceased.

From another perspective, the grieving period may involve making moral choices concerning: the best possible outcome for the greatest number of people regarding funeral arrangements and distribution of the deceased's goods (consequential theory); deciding what actions a bereaved individual should or should not undertake such as paying a particular sum for the funeral, viewing the corpse, administering the deceased's estate, or giving a eulogy (deontological theory); and managing character traits both during the grieving/mourning period and thereafter in life (virtue theory).

It would be trite to suggest that either personal development, concern for other people or existential awareness is encouraged by a particular type of death -

although it is possible to hypothesise that experiencing parental death in childhood might affect personal development rather more than existential awareness because changes in roles, role models, responsibilities and living standards could, as Eisenstadt (1978) and Kremetz (1991) suggest, foster early independence and maturity. It is also possible to consider that cognitive and emotional maturity enable bereaved teenagers to empathise with others experiencing sorrow and loss or to view all of life and all living things as fragile and precious in ways that a child tends not to do. One can also argue that part of the reason for an enhanced sense of personal mortality and an appreciation of the transience of life is due to an increased exposure to death - which is inevitable as we age - and that this may be promoted early in life by the death of a sibling, peer or someone with whom we had expected to share our lives.

#### **Bereavement and moral and spiritual development: background literature**

The little work that has been undertaken so far examining bereavement and spiritual and/or moral development has usually involved adults and a definition of spirituality influenced by traditional religious (usually Judaeo-Christian) beliefs regarding prayer for consolation and changed religious feeling (Loveland, 1968); religious behaviour and orientation (Peterson and Greil, 1990); belief in an afterlife (Smith et al 1992), and moderation of intensity of grief through religious belief (Austin and Lennings, 1993). The work of Edmonds and Hooker (1992) seems to come closest to some of my approaches regarding age of respondents and perspective on outcome. They found that 71% of 49 university students (mean age 19 years) who had lost a parent, sibling or grandparent in a parenting role during the previous three years reported a positive change in life goals when questioned about changes in 'cosmic' and 'secular' meaning.

Balk (1983, p 138) observes that "most research information about bereaved children comes from professionals treating disturbed children" or from secondary sources (parents, relatives and teachers) rather than the children or young

people themselves. In order to address these limitations and others mentioned earlier in this chapter regarding assumptions about negative outcomes, I recognize that information needs to be obtained directly (primary source) and recently (short to medium term) from 'normal' (non-clinical) bereaved children and young people. While acknowledging some of the limitations of using long-term retrospective accounts - although, of course, *all* accounts of bereavement must, of necessity, be retrospective - they are used in this thesis for their value in providing life-time overviews. I take this stance based upon Robinson's findings that nearly three quarters of his respondents saw the childhood experiences they reported as "the first steps in a process of growing awareness which was not to be complete until later" (1977, p 41).

Work by the following people enabled me to explore the ideas of children and young people about bereavement and closeness to God/ divine spirit, religious beliefs and practices and moral thinking and behaviour: Robinson (1977) regarding authentic childhood experiences; Fowler (1981) regarding faith development following crises; Hay and Morisy (1978) and Hay (1987) regarding experiences of God or a sense of the deceased; and Tamminen (1991) regarding the religious and moral thinking of school pupils.

My research methods, findings and conclusions will be presented in Part Two.

## **PART TWO**

## **CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Introduction**

In chapter five I explained why I needed to obtain information directly and recently from 'normal' children and young people and that accounts from adults would provide medium to long term retrospective views. I worked in two schools teaching death-related topics to obtain an overview of the frequency of bereavement during the school years and discover what the feelings, thoughts and behavioural reactions of pupils were to the death of someone they knew. I gave the same kind of information-gathering questionnaire to 42 adults drawn from different groups and to 89 young people at Maxwell Secondary School (72 pupils aged 11-12 in Year 7 and 19 pupils aged 14-15 in Year 10) but used more indirect methods to obtain some of the same information from 19 pupils aged 9-10 years in Year 5 at Hester Primary School. I also interviewed 15 children and young people aged 5-16 years in non-school contexts in order to obtain in more depth the same kind of information gathered in schools, and the heart of my work consisted of semi-structured interviews at Winston Youth Club with 4 teenagers whose parent and/or sibling had died. The total number of respondents in this study is 169 (150 questionnaires and 19 interviews, although I also interviewed 2 adults who completed questionnaires), of whom 108 were at school when I spoke to them. In chapter 7 I present my findings in themes, using material from respondents of all ages to illuminate that given by the 4 teenagers.

The first section of this chapter explains and attempts to justify my research methods and the second section is a narrative account of the work I undertook (see Appendix 2 for a chronological overview).

## **SECTION ONE: METHODS AND APPROACHES USED**

### **Making contacts**

One of the first difficulties I experienced when I began this research in January 1993 was that I moved to Devon where I had no school contacts and knew no-one involved in bereavement counselling. I had taught in four schools in the Northamptonshire-Leicestershire area between 1969 and 1992 and had built up a range of contacts in primary and secondary schools, youth groups, drama centres, local churches and other places of worship. In coming to Devon I had to start afresh and to build up contacts without the advantage of working in a school in order to facilitate this. I also stopped working as a 'Cruse' counsellor since I realised that working with clients while I also wrote a PhD on bereavement would be emotionally stressful.

### **Ethics protocol**

Before the work started I developed working principles relating to gaining informed consent, offering confidentiality and the right to withdraw, protecting respondents from harm, being open and honest with them about my work and using appropriate debriefing procedures (Appendix 3).

### ***Informed consent***

I recognised that gaining informed consent to work in schools often involved negotiating three permission levels: first the headteacher (and, potentially, governors), then parents and finally pupils. By contrast, I deemed that young people aged 16-18 who could be in either employment or further education were capable of deciding for themselves whether or not to speak with me and that they did not need their school's or parents' permission to do so. I always gave a written account of my proposed work to the parents of children and young people aged 5-16 (Appendix 6).

### ***Protection from harm and Debriefing***

I knew it was important to explain to respondents that discussions of death and bereavement might be upsetting both before and after interviews or completing questionnaires. As a 'Cruse' counsellor I knew it was helpful at the end of a session to refocus clients' thinking onto whatever they were going to do next and how they could obtain further help - either from me or another person - if needed.

### ***Confidentiality***

This feature of the protocol gave me the greatest difficulty although I always stressed that whatever information was given to me would be treated in complete confidence, that I would not discuss what I was told with other people in such a way that the respondent could be identified, and that I would use a pseudonym to describe respondents.

However, at an early stage in the research I stated that if I wanted to make use of anything respondents had said or written I would show them a copy for their approval first. I used this approach with some of the 17 adults who attended the 'Sea of Faith' conference workshop in July 1993 (Clark, 1995) but found that since they did not always reply to my request for permission I had to assume that silence indicated indifference. Furthermore, after I had obtained data from Year 5 at Hester School I realised that I could not return in 1995 or 1996 to ask permission to use the material from pupils or their parents since, by the time I wrote my thesis, the pupils would be in a different school and I did not know (or wish to have) their addresses.

After consultation with my supervisor I removed the promise to show material in order to gain approval from my ethics protocol, questionnaires and introductory letters but gave full transcriptions of interviews to the 2 adults on whom I piloted my interview methods and to the 4 teenagers whose stories form the focus of my work.

### ***Right to withdraw and openness and honesty***

These features of the protocol were specific to working in schools since adults and young people were always prepared for the content of the interview, questionnaire or workshop discussion. When discussions of death took place within the school context, however, I felt it was particularly necessary to allow pupils the opportunity to leave or withdraw and that I needed to explain clearly and honestly what the work was about.

While it was necessary for my protocol to contain such assurances in order for me to work in schools, I felt they also implied that death-related discussions were not suitable for children and young people and that they should be protected from them. This perspective contradicted my own belief that death education in the broadest sense should be part of the curriculum (Clark, 1991) and I knew that if I had still been teaching English or drama at secondary level I would not have had to give these assurances since many classroom texts I have used readily prompt opportunities to discuss death: eg Walkabout (Marshall, 1959), Macbeth (Shakespeare, 1963).

### **Overview of data collection**

Using questionnaires and interviews I tried to ascertain facts such as:

- How frequent the experience of bereavement is for children and young people while at school.
- How frequently funerals are attended.

In both the short, medium and long term, I sought to explore more abstract aspects such as:

- Whether untimely death (parent, sibling), situation-specific death (friend, special relationship, first, sudden or violent death) or timely death (grandparents, elderly and other relations etc) are significant and why.
- What the emotional responses to death are.
- What kind of reasons are given and beliefs are held to explain death.
- Whether relationships with family members and other people are affected.
- Whether personality, hobbies and interests are affected.
- What sense (if any) is made of the event of death regarding the meaning or purpose of and in life.
- What part (if any) school life plays in the grieving process.
- How helpful school staff seem to be.
- How far a traditional faith or a belief in God/divine spirit influences the experience of bereavement.
- What beliefs are held about what happens after death.
- Whether there is any correlation between bereavement and so-called religious experiences.
- Whether there is any correlation between bereavement and moral thinking, feeling and behaviour (eg: concerning duty, consequences or displaying virtues).

### **Questions used to explore bereavement and moral and spiritual development**

As I explained in chapter 5, some of the questions used by Robinson (1977), Fowler (1981) and Tamminen (1991) enabled me to devise questionnaires probing family relationships, significant deaths, responses to a specific death and to include a question like Hay's (1987) which I felt might relate to the experience of bereavement: "Have you ever felt as though you were very close to a powerful spiritual force that seemed to lift you out of yourself?" The four parts of Fowler's interview guide (life review, life-shaping experiences and relationships, present values and commitments, and religion) were useful, although I was aware that

some of his questions were better used orally than in writing. I used Fowler's notion of dividing life into chapters in each of my interviews with bereaved teenagers and the idea of identifying 'turning points' in both questionnaires and interviews.

The following is a summary, divided into the three themes used to analyse the data in chapter 8, of how and why questions were formulated, adapted and sometimes deleted from my questionnaires and interview schedules. (See Appendices 4 and 5 for the final versions of the questionnaire used with adults and young people.)

### **Confidentiality and anonymity**

All respondents were assured of confidentiality at the beginning of the questionnaire or interview. However, as explained earlier in this chapter, I removed the guarantee given in the first 18 questionnaires ("if I want to make use of anything you have said in my work, I will show you a copy of your response for approval first") when I realised I could not do this if respondents replied anonymously or could not easily be contacted. Pupils were told, "I will use another name to describe you," and adults were told that I would use a pseudonym.

### **Theme 1: Personal development over time**

This theme tries to take a holistic view of people, bearing in mind their family situation both before and after the death, and their ongoing relationships with family, friends and others. Their developing personality, behaviour, creativity, interests and thinking about life are also considered in the light of bereavement.

### ***Whether parents are alive, separated or divorced***

All respondents gave details of age, sex and number of siblings but only Year 7 and 10 pupils answered the explicit question: "Do you live with both your parents?" I obtained the same information from the 19 interviewees by indirect questioning.

### ***Values and people, possessions, ambitions etc***

All questionnaire respondents except Pilot 1 and 'Sea of Faith' delegates were asked which people and what other things are of value to them.

### ***Emotional responses to bereavement***

All questionnaire respondents were asked how they felt at the time of the death and Year 7 and 10 pupils were also asked how they felt or thought about it now.

### ***Effect of bereavement on family relationships***

All questionnaire respondents and the 4 interviewed teenagers were asked how they got on with their family after the death. The 15 interviewees were often asked this question more indirectly.

### ***Effects of bereavement on relationships with other people and on work***

All questionnaire respondents were asked about their relationship with people who were not family members after the death and, where appropriate, the 19 interviewees were also asked this question .

### ***Effects of bereavement on personality, interests, creativity, hobbies etc***

The early version of the questionnaire for adults (Pilot 1, 'Sea of Faith') and the later version of the questionnaire for pupils (Years 7 and 10) asked about any changes of personality, behaviour, creative or sporting interests after the death.

All 19 interviewees were asked this question indirectly.

## **Theme 2: Interaction between bereavement and school events**

This theme explores the perceived inter-relationship between bereavement and schooling, including frequency of bereavement during the school years and how grief, mourning customs such as funeral attendance, and coping with the process of grieving fit into school life.

### ***Frequency of bereavement while at school***

All questionnaires included a list of people defined by relationship and respondents were asked to underline anyone they knew who had died and to write in their own age at the time of each death. I asked 14 adults to answer further questions on a death experienced before 18 years ('Sea of Faith' delegates) and 20 adults to answer about any experienced before 19 years (PGCE students). I knew if any of the 19 interviewees had been recently or significantly bereaved as either they or their parents had told me.

### ***Whether any bereavement is seen as a significant event in life***

The early version of the questionnaire (Pilot 1, 'Sea of Faith') did not ask adult respondents about significant or 'turning' points in their life, but the later version for adults (PGCE) and pupils in Years 7 and 10 did.

### ***Importance of particular deaths***

Questionnaires for Pilot 2, PGCE, Year 7 and 10 pupils focused on one particular death by asking which death was most significant or important and why. When appropriate, this information was gained from the 19 interviewees more indirectly.

### ***Attendance at funerals***

All respondents in questionnaires and interviews were asked whether or not they went to the funeral if a human death was being described.

### ***Bereavement and other life events***

All questionnaire respondents were asked what else was happening in their life at the time of the death in order to see how far school life was seen as a background for the death event. Where this information was not explicit interviewees were also asked this question.

## **Theme 3: Moral and spiritual development**

This theme explores the influence of traditional religious beliefs and practices on bereaved people regarding what they believe happens after death and whether they have ever had a religious experience (a sense of something or someone

present). It is also concerned with moral attitudes and behaviour, expressions of practical spirituality and the influence of other people, including the deceased.

### ***Influence of and commitment to traditional religious beliefs and practices***

Questionnaires for Pilot 1, 'Sea of Faith' and Pilot 2 did not ask about religious upbringing or current religious affiliations but questionnaires for PGCE students and school pupils did. The 19 interviewees were also asked this question.

### ***Adult explanations given to bereaved children and young people about death***

All questionnaires asked what kind of explanations for death - whether medical, religious, spiritual, moral or whatever - were given to them. All 4 teenagers were asked the same question rather less overtly and, when appropriate, it was asked of the 15 other interviewees.

### ***Adult support given to bereaved children and young people***

All questionnaires asked whether anyone talked to respondents about the death in question to try to comfort or help them and what they said or did. All 4 teenagers were asked the same question and, when appropriate, it was asked of the 15 other interviewees.

### ***Conflicts between 'institutional' and 'pre-personal' and 'personal' religion***

Only the adult respondents were asked about the beliefs (as opposed to explanations) that other people gave or shared with them mainly because, when asked of children and young people, it seemed ambiguous and to repeat the question concerning explanations.

### ***Traditional religious beliefs and formulation of new ones***

All questionnaire respondents and interviewees were asked: "What do you think happens to us when we die?"

### ***Belief in God***

Pupils in both schools and the 19 interviewees were asked whether or not they believed that God exists but adults were not asked this question.

### ***Sensing the presence of the deceased or God/ divine spirit***

Questionnaires for adults asked whether they had ever had a 'religious experience' and questionnaires for pupils asked whether they had at times felt that God or a divine power was close to them. The four teenagers were asked if they had ever had a sense of the deceased with them. All 15 interviewees and 108 pupil respondents aged 5-16 were also asked to indicate which of 20 situations they thought God or a divine spirit might be near to them or other people.

### ***Moral attitudes and expressions of practical spirituality***

Year 7 pupils at Maxwell School and the 15 school-age interviewees were asked whether there was anything happening in the world that upset or annoyed them, made them want to stop it, pleased them, or made them want to do the same. They were also asked if they had ever taken part in any fund-raising or charity event.

### ***Influence of bereavement on attitude to life***

All adults answered a question concerning their present attitude to life, whether linked explicitly with bereavement (Pilot 1, 'Sea of Faith') or not (Pilot 2, PGCE). Pupils and the 15 school-age interviewees were not asked this question but the 4 teenagers were.

### ***Influence of bereavement on meaning in or of life***

Only some questionnaires for adults (Pilot 1, 'Sea of Faith') asked whether any experiences (including the death mentioned) had confirmed a sense of a meaning in life, mainly because the question implied that a meaning in life could be found. I also discussed this issue with the 4 teenagers.

### ***Impact over time of bereavement on values and views of life***

All questionnaire respondents and the 4 teenagers were asked whether the death discussed affected their life or their thinking about life in any way.

### **Debriefing**

All questionnaires contained a form of debriefing at the end and all interviewees were asked how they felt about the things we had been discussing.

## **Abandoned questions**

### ***Present situation and moral and spiritual development***

A question asking in what area of life the respondent was "growing, struggling or wrestling with doubt in your life" was deleted after the first pilot when someone declined to answer, saying it was too painful to do so.

### ***Links between religion and morality***

A question asking respondents to consider whether "without religion, morality has no meaning" was deleted after piloting on the first three adults because two said it sounded like an examination question.

## **Particular approaches used in the collection of this data**

### ***Pseudonyms***

Each respondent in my research has been assigned a pseudonym at random from a list which does not include any participant's real name (if known) and the names of schools, teachers and other adults have been similarly changed.

### ***Role adopted when working in schools***

I could not observe how members of staff in schools taught or discussed death and bereavement since such a topic is rare on the timetable (Eiser et al, 1995) and, even if it were regularly taught, it would be difficult to observe as an outsider because of its emotional content. Instead, as a temporary member of staff or invited speaker, I was a participant observer trying to find out, as my lessons (or sessions) proceeded, what pupils thought about the ideas and concepts generated by using discussions, drawings and questionnaires. I always talked about my mother's death by way of sharing my own story with pupils (Gray, 1986).

Sessions at Hester Primary School often began with completion of a questionnaire as I could prepare the room before the pupils came in. I separated them from each other - emphasizing that I wanted their ideas and not their

neighbour's - and we moved the desks back together to form a large table for everyone to sit at for the next activity. However I was aware that completing a questionnaire in this way must often have felt like a test or 'just another piece of schoolwork' (Denscombe and Aubrook, 1992) as the pupils probably did not feel they had any opportunity to refuse. I am not sure that I really obtained informed consent as my ethics protocol required.

When I was invited to speak to Year 10 and Year 7 pupils at Maxwell Secondary School as part of a topic on bereavement and death within the PSE/RE curriculum, I introduced myself as "Valerie Clark" in order to reduce the usual adult-child divisions and tried to play down my 'expert' billing by explaining that everyone had her or his own unique experiences of death. To further improve communication, I wrote down and learnt the names of the 17 members of the Year 10 class in the first session. I asked all members of the three Year 7 classes to write their names on badges in their first session (in the sport hall) and to write them on pieces of paper on their desks in the second session (in a classroom) so that I could address them by name. A few pupils became visibly upset during both sessions but I think I was always aware of this and able to allow them the chance to leave the room if needed. I always asked each pupil individually how she or he felt before leaving the lesson and reminded them all that they might feel sad afterwards and named the particular member of staff available to speak with them if required.

### ***Researcher-teacher or researcher-counsellor?***

At Hester School I was aware of the teacher-researcher dilemma as I had a sense of what was appropriate in the classroom in terms of noise levels, laughter, quality of work and pupil involvement and did not wish to be seen and treated by the pupils as an inexperienced or supply teacher. Nevertheless, as a researcher, I wanted to hear what pupils were prepared to tell me and, since I was usually alone in a classroom with them, I sometimes had to decide whether to tolerate or

reprimand how they spoke to me and to each other. Sometimes I felt that my inner role conflict affected what I encouraged pupils to tell me.

While interviewing I was often aware of the researcher-counsellor dilemma of (a) keeping to a semi-structured format and (b) checking that the tape recorder was functioning as well as (c) responding empathically and non-judgementally to whatever respondents wanted to tell me.

### ***Anonymity of respondents***

Throughout my research I emphasized to children and young people that once I had completed my work or had interviewed them for the agreed number of times they were safe from any further probing by me. Although I addressed each pupil by name (as described above) I emphasised that I did not need names on questionnaires. I always gave participants my business card at the end of the research (after the workshop, interview or last lesson) for them to be able to contact me further if ever *they* wished to do so but, except for children of colleagues and friends, I do not know how I can contact them further. In fact I emphasized to pupils at both schools that I would probably never see them again.

I used the same approach with the four key respondents, Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity, whom I interviewed two or three times each. They had an address and telephone number at which to contact me but I did not ask for their addresses or surnames and Fiona, the youth worker, made contact with each of them in different ways. She occasionally employed Rita as a baby-sitter and could contact Sheila and Verity through college registers but, having no personal details for Thelma, happened to meet her in the street. Rita, Sheila and Verity attend the same further education establishment and Thelma attends another.

I did not know at that stage in my research what I would want to use in my thesis and so was unable to indicate in the transcripts how their material would be used. I promised to send to Wendy and Yoland (the two PGCE students whom I

interviewed) a copy of what I wrote containing their material but I have not tried to contact any of the four teenagers to gain approval for what I have written. I have adopted this rather unusual tactic because I believe that the success and quality of my interviews with the four teenagers depended upon their one-off nature. I told each one that I would not need to contact her again after we had spoken and I do not wish to go back on that agreement. Furthermore, I am not sure how I could *send* any material to their home addresses (even if I knew them) or via Fiona as (a) Sheila did not tell her father she was speaking with me, (b) Thelma and Verity told their mothers but not their fathers and (c) they will all leave further education in May-June 1996.

### ***Opportunity and self-selection***

My sampling methods were opportunistic rather than strategically selected because I had to take every chance offered to teach a death-related topic, to distribute questionnaires or ask to interview people.

My adult respondents were self-selected because they either chose out of interest to attend the conference workshop I was offering or agreed, when requested by me, to complete a questionnaire or be interviewed. I think that adult questionnaire respondents who had the chance to refuse (such as the PGCE sample) did not do so when they believed they had had an experience that matched what I was asking about. For example, Wendy and Yoland used the space on the questionnaire to offer to help me further. I felt important factors in their willingness to speak to me were that both had had a grandparent die recently (although it was a bereavement outside my age range of 5-18); both had had a friend die while in their teens, and both had experiences of sensing the presence of a deceased person.

### ***Sex of respondents***

Although there is material from 97 females and 72 males in this study (total = 169), the 4 bereaved teenagers whom I interviewed were all female. In fact, Fiona

did not know of any significantly bereaved teenage males to introduce me to - although Rita mentioned 3 peers whose parent or sibling had died.

The imbalance in gender can be explained as follows. I used 6 females and 2 males when piloting my work (8 adults in Pilots 1 and 2) as I knew of more significantly bereaved females to ask to help me because they had talked about their experiences. The number of males and females attending my conference workshop was the same (7 males, 7 females) and I interviewed 8 female and 7 male children of friends and colleagues. Two male adults in their twenties agreed to be interviewed but due to a variety of reasons this did not happen, and three teenagers whom I approached through relatives declined to be interviewed. (One of these had had a sibling die and he felt he would get too upset.) However, as there were more females than males on the PGCE course, it is not surprising that out of the total response ( $n = 20$ ) 15 were female and 5 were male. Finally, in both schools where I worked there was a great inequality in gender distribution: Hester's Year 9 class had 6 females and 13 males; Maxwell's Year 7 had 46 females and 26 males and its Year 10 class had 5 females and 12 males.

This imbalance in representation may indicate - at least among the teenagers - a greater willingness in females to share their emotional experiences even if they become tearful and emotional, as well as a greater tendency among males to keep their feelings to themselves and cope by avoiding the issue (Stroebe and Stroebe, 1989). Overall, of course, the fact that I am female must also have had some impact on whether or not people responded to my request for information.

## **SECTION TWO: ACCOUNT OF WORK UNDERTAKEN**

In seeking to obtain primary source accounts by children and young people who have been bereaved during their school years, my data were collected in what I now recognize as two phases: research in school and research out of school. These two phases were further divided into three approaches, as shown below:

### ***Phase 1: Research in school:***

Work in schools exploring bereavement feelings and ways of remembering the dead.

### ***Phase 2: Research out of school:***

(a) Interviews and questionnaires with adults who had experienced many bereavements, and with children and young people who had experienced fewer bereavements than adults or none at all.

(b) Interviews with 4 teenagers whose parent and/or sibling had died.

The narrative account of data collection that follows describes and comments on work undertaken using these three approaches.

## **PHASE 1: RESEARCH IN SCHOOL**

### **First steps in making school contacts**

Initially I decided to work in schools where the more common bereavement experience would be the death of grandparents, older relatives and pets. I felt confident that my experience as a teacher and more recent experience as a bereavement counsellor would enable me to handle whatever pupils might tell me. Describing myself as a researcher - not 'research student' as this often implies a junior position in schools - at the centre for Research into Moral, Spiritual and Cultural Understanding and Education (RIMSCUE centre), I first wrote to the headteacher of Fleur Secondary School asking for an interview to

discuss my research ideas. However, I had not anticipated the extent to which delegation of administration is sometimes necessary in large schools and my letter was answered by a member of the senior management team who refused my request, explaining:

As you so rightly say, bereavement is a very sensitive issue and we would not wish any of our pupils who had suffered a bereavement to be approached, except by someone familiar to them.

This reminded me that face-to-face negotiation was essential in order to allay the fears of school staff because, as Gray (1986) observes, personal contact enables parents and school personnel to gain a perception of the researcher as a person, rather than to merely evaluate research procedures or academic qualifications. My first attempt at making contact with a school was not successful because (1) I wrote to an unknown headteacher and did not use a personal approach, (2) I focused my request on bereaved pupils and the difficulties of speaking with them, and (3) I was unknown to both staff and pupils. I reconsidered whether my request to talk to bereaved pupils had been wise and, at the suggestion of my Director of Studies, reshaped the focus of my research in order to compare moral and spiritual development in both bereaved and non-bereaved pupils. Thereby I hoped to make it clear that my main interest was in the moral and spiritual development of *all* pupils and that, while being sensitive to the needs of bereaved pupils in the group, they were not my main focus.

### **Second steps in making school contacts**

Having recognised the need for personal contact and knowing that it takes time to turn contacts into plans which can be implemented, I used every opportunity to explain my research to teachers whom I met. At a research seminar in March 1993 a member of staff from Maxwell School expressed interest in my research and asked me to speak, at a later date, on death and bereavement as part of the school's Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme. (That work will be described later in this chapter.) In June 1993 I secured the agreement of the

headteacher of Hester School - where I had previously visited with a colleague on school practice supervision - to do research there in the following academic year. This latter opportunity particularly gave me the chance to promote 'death education' (Clark, 1991) and I developed a scheme of work for Year 5 in line with the locally agreed syllabus for RE, entitled 'Remembering the Dead.' Issues surrounding this work will be described next.

### **Parental reactions to the bereavement issue**

In addition to obtaining parental consent to talk with pupils about death (Appendix 3, item 1), I needed to comply with guidelines relating to parental right of withdrawal from RE (DfE Circular 1/94) since it was possible - though unlikely - that parents would refuse permission because of the content related to *religion* rather than death. Letters of explanation were sent (Appendix 6 i) and the headteacher, class teacher and I agreed to interpret parental consent to use the child's work as agreement for their child to take part in the project.

Four parents contacted the headteacher about the content of the letter and I met them the day before the work was due to start. They were: Belinda's mother (Belinda's grandfather and uncle had died within the previous year); Shirley's mother (Shirley's grandmother had died within the last two years); and Desmond's parents. Desmond's father said that the children in the class were "too young" to discuss death and, as he considered his son had had no experience of bereavement so far, asked whether I could work separately with the bereaved and non-bereaved children in order to prevent those who had not had such an experience hearing from those who had. I explained that arranging such groupings would require asking many more sensitive questions than any that I had already planned to ask and his wife, also realising the difficulty, told him that 'non-bereaved' was a very difficult term to define as their son might consider himself 'bereaved' because of the death of a neighbour, although they did not.

At the end of the meeting the three mothers expressed acceptance of the project, indicating that their children would take part. The mothers of Belinda and Shirley said they hoped that by allowing their children to talk about death I might make it easier for them to come to terms with it. Belinda's mother, who was undergoing psychiatric help to deal with her father's death, hoped that her child would not "become as frightened of it as I am" and asked if I would be available to help her family if necessary. I indicated that, while not expressly offering counselling, I could be available, but I heard no more from her.

Twelve out of 22 sets of parents gave their unqualified consent. One parent gave permission but wished to be able to withdraw this at a future date if necessary, and only 3 withheld it. However, 6 had not replied by the day before the project was to begin and the headteacher and class teacher suggested that I proceed on the assumption that silence indicated indifference. Therefore 19 of the 22 pupils in the class were divided into three groups of 7, 7 and 5 and these pupils took part in all or most of the six weekly sessions from 10th November until 15th December 1993.

I noted that, in future, if possible I should try to provide a meeting between myself and parents - whether they were anxious or not - in line with Gray's account of a father who asked to meet him, explaining that he "just wanted to see what I looked like" (1986, p 359). This need, however, did not arise at Maxwell School where the topic was part of the PSE curriculum and was never an issue when I asked colleagues and friends to interview their children .

### **The right to withdraw and confidentiality**

My ethics protocol (Appendix 3) required that I gained informed consent not only from the parents but also from the children and offered them the right to withdraw at any time. In practice, this meant that I needed to remind them before each session that they could leave if they wished and that quite normal feelings of

sadness and upset might arise after they had talked about people they knew who had died. It was not always easy to get the right balance between offering the chance to withdraw from what seemed like an ordinary lesson (from which pupils do not normally withdraw once they are seated round a table with the teacher) while making it feel that there was no need to do so. Similarly, explaining that feelings of sadness were quite normal as they settled down to the session - often with anticipation - sometimes seemed to undo the enthusiasm they brought to the work. As I was not a member of staff I was always anxious not to upset the emotional tone or 'sentimental order' (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) of the whole class when pupils returned to it after sharing details of bereavements and ideas about death with me.

Belinda and Shirley did not indicate loss of any relative at the start of the project although they referred to them later. This made me wonder whether some children hold back from declaring their bereaved state in order not to appear different from their peers, or do not consider themselves to be bereaved (although they clearly are because their parents are) or feel the loss so deeply that, even seeing others share similar events, are not encouraged to do so. I could not tell how far the apparent reticence in those pupils that I knew were bereaved was also present in others whose parents I had not met. If present, it means an under-representation of self-reported bereavements from this age group using the indirect method I adopted.

However, overall I felt, as Koocher (1974, p 21) also did when discussing death concepts with 6-17 year olds, that "I was spending considerably more time concerned about the subjects than the data." This anxiety was probably due to the fact that my request to come into school to teach a death-related topic was considered unusual or potentially disturbing by both staff and parents. This feeling may be further reflected in the fact that, although I had discussed with the headteacher the possibility of working there later in the year, she did not respond to my requests to let me do so. I had none of these anxieties when I worked in

Maxwell School, though, since I was present in the school in a specialist role contributing to a prepared PSE topic.

### **Death education within PSE**

I spoke to a Year 10 class of 17 pupils at Maxwell School in February 1994 after their parents had received a letter explaining my work (Appendix 6 ii) in which I asked for return of the reply slip only if they did *not* give permission for their child's work to be used in my thesis. This was a refinement of the request I made at Hester School for parents to *give or withhold* permission for me to use their child's material in my thesis (and hence to participate in or withdraw from the project).

I invited Year 10 pupils to talk about their own experiences of death - which they did quite openly and willingly. On my second visit in June I tried to follow up issues from the first visit but sensed that the class were rather less willing to talk to me so openly again - perhaps because they had shared as much as they wished the first time and had not expected to see me again (although I had told them on the first visit that I hoped to return). I asked them to complete a questionnaire on their bereavement experiences and, by way of comparison with Hester pupils, asked them to complete another one concerning belief in God and having a sense of the presence of God. This was probably too much to ask of them but I felt I needed to obtain some written record of their ideas and experiences since the first session had been mainly discussion.

The whole of Year 7 (79 pupils) were told by their form tutors of my first visit in March 1994 (when I spoke to them all in the sports hall) and I devised a lesson including sharing of loss activities. Parents were informed of my second visit in June-July to discuss the first session and were invited to make contact with the school or myself if they had any enquiries about the work but not asked to take any action to give permission for their child to take part (Appendix 6 iii) .

I spoke with each Year 7 class separately during the course of one week. However, I gave them a longer questionnaire than any single one that Year 10 had had for comparison purposes comprising personal bereavement details, ideas about God and religious belief (Appendix 5). Not everyone completed it because it was too long for the half hour I allowed and I told anyone who had had a "very recent" bereavement (I did not state a period of time but left it to them to decide) not to complete the centre pages containing those questions if they preferred. Thus, by offering better opportunities for informed consent I may have reduced my chances of obtaining bereavement details of a complete school year group.

## **PHASE 2: RESEARCH OUT OF SCHOOL**

### **(a) ADULTS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN**

The second approach ran parallel with the first one (see Appendix 2) because although the research was concerned with the experiences of children and young people, I knew at the outset that I also needed to obtain material from adults because of two perceived difficulties: language and accessibility. The younger the children the less likely they were to be able to express their ideas in terms that I could appreciate. This is not to say that they would not have some bereavement experiences to share but that they were likely to be fewer than those of adults and their accounts likely to be less sophisticated. Early on in my research, therefore, I asked adults to look back on their experiences in order for me to get a sense of perspective on what I was exploring. I also knew that it would be easier to gain access to adults than children and to get their feedback on my questions.

After I had begun talking with the 4 bereaved teenagers (see below) I realised I also needed other young people of the same age or younger with whom to compare experiences and ideas in more depth. I had obtained some data from working in schools but could not return to get detailed stories from any of those respondents because I had offered them complete anonymity so I circulated a

request for help to colleagues at the University of Plymouth whom I knew were - or, because of their age, guessed could be - parents. I also asked friends in the Exmouth area who had children if they could help me. I always checked with parents if their children had had a recent bereavement and, when requested, showed parents the questions that I planned to ask. I interviewed 15 respondents over a 3 month period using this approach and their interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes in length.

In a sense I progressed towards greater difficulty in my research by beginning with the easiest and least stressful stories and progressed via this second phase towards the hardest and most stressful to discuss. My listening and analytic skills also improved as the work progressed.

## **PHASE 2 : RESEARCH OUT OF SCHOOL**

### **(b) INTERVIEWS WITH BEREAVED TEENAGERS**

The third phase, using semi-structured in-depth interviews, consisted of 10 meetings over a seven month period. It was the most fruitful in terms of quantitative data but also, in another sense, the most demanding. My work at Hester School had been difficult because I had needed to balance the teacher-researcher role while working with children whose experience of death was limited within an environment that seemed anxious about the work I was doing. Although this anxiety was less at Maxwell School I could not talk further with bereaved pupils I met there and the children of friends and colleagues were probably volunteered by their parents because they had not experienced any significant bereavements. Therefore, having the opportunity to interview teenagers whose parent or sibling had died legitimated my field of research. At last I was able to talk to young people who understood what I was asking about!

However, it was not easy to find bereaved young people to interview. After deciding that schools were not a satisfactory approach, I tried other ways of

contacting them using personal referrals. I spoke unsuccessfully to 'Cruse' group organisers, ministers of religion, counsellors and others who worked with young people and, at last, a youth worker (to whom I had once loaned some books) agreed to introduce me to several teenagers who had been bereaved of a parent or sibling and offered the youth centre as a venue.

I prepared a list of questions for the first interview with each teenager based upon some of Fowler's ideas, adapted to whether or not a parent or sibling had died (Appendix 7) and I checked which questions had not been answered after each interview. Although I had an idea of what I wanted to talk about overall, I did not stop them telling me other things as well if they wanted to. Sometimes questions that I expected would come up ~~in the~~ the *final* interview (such as career plans) were raised in the first interview, and both Thelma and Verity told me about aspects of their lives that did not seem directly related to the issue of bereavement - although, adopting an holistic perspective, I would suggest that they probably are related.

After I interviewed Rita (Appendix 9) I saw that our three conversations had followed a pattern: in the first session she told her story and talked about how she felt about the deaths; in the second session we discussed mainly moral, religious and spiritual ideas; and in the third session she talked about her future plans, how she felt about our conversations and then we said good-bye. I intended to continue that pattern with the other three teenagers and managed a similar pattern with Thelma who also spoke to me three times. However, as Sheila and Verity did not come to their third sessions I did not ask them all the questions I had planned.

Rita, Sheila and Verity did not seem to find it difficult to talk to me once they felt at ease, but I often felt that Thelma found it hard going. I suspect that she was not used to talking about herself very much and had probably never talked so exhaustively about herself to anyone before - let alone a stranger. When I

transcribed the conversations I found for example that, although Rita often began her answers with "I don't know," she usually went on to develop her ideas. Sheila spoke very succinctly and, although Verity thought she had nothing to say about her sister's death, she discussed many topics with ease. Thelma, on the other hand, often spoke quite briefly and I was particularly aware after our first session of doing far more talking to encourage her, or to explain myself further, than I had done with either Rita (see Appendix 9) or Sheila. Transcribing enabled me to 'hear' the conversation again, to see how far questions had been answered and to quickly decide what other areas remained unexplored. I transcribed the eight interviews with Rita, Sheila and Thelma but, due to pressure of work, needed secretarial help for the two with Verity.

As Rita, Sheila and Thelma lived in town I met with each one in the evening at the youth centre when it was being used for sports training rather than a youth club meeting when some of their friends might be present. We talked in a private room without any apparent observation by others. Verity, however, lived out of town so she met me during her non-timetabled college sessions in the afternoons at the empty youth club.

I am sure I was perceived as an acceptable person to talk to by these young people because I was introduced to them by Fiona and allowed to use the youth club for the interviews. Fiona introduced me to Rita, the first one I interviewed, at her home and I surmise that Rita mentioned me to Sheila and Verity, both of whom she knew well, so I was probably doubly recommended. The first interview with Sheila, Thelma and Verity took place at the same time as the introduction - in other words, all three agreed to stay and talk to me after being introduced and, when Verity first came to meet me, Sheila accompanied her to say hello and to collect something I had left for her with Fiona. I think I can assume that Sheila, Thelma and Verity had either decided to be interviewed before they came (because of implicit recommendation by Fiona or overt

recommendation by one another) and/or decided that I looked like the sort of person they would like to talk to when they met me - as Rita probably had.

This final phase of work was quite liberating because, although each interview was emotionally demanding, I was not constrained by the need to obtain access, consent and a timetable slot. Furthermore, I did not have to worry about inadvertently upsetting these teenagers because they had chosen to talk to me and knew what the topic for discussion was. Neither did I have to seek permission from headteachers and parents because they met me out of school time and, as they were aged 16-18, my ethics protocol deemed them capable of deciding for themselves whether or not to share their experiences with me (Appendix 3), although in order to officially inform their parent(s) of our meetings I gave each one a letter of introduction to use if she wished. Sheila chose not to tell her father she was speaking to me (she did not seem to consider telling her stepmother) but said she would when we had finished meeting, and Thelma and Verity told their mothers but not their fathers. Rita, by contrast, told her mother (and perhaps her stepfather) immediately.

Talking with them also offered me the chance to use my counselling skills and I felt more comfortable with this direct approach than with the indirect one of teaching about death in schools. The two different approaches also provided me with different data: work in schools indicated frequency of bereavements in a whole class or whole year group; interviewing bereaved teenagers allowed me to hear personal stories of loss.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN : RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

In chapter five I proposed an adaptation model following bereavement and in chapters two and three I suggested that the following forms of thinking, feeling and behaving (which I describe as moral and spiritual development) might be indicative of such adaptations.

- Moving beyond socio-conventional beliefs concerning one's own and other people's morality. Acting in ways that are moral but not necessarily conventional; not only refraining from harm but also being actively benevolent and taking time and effort to help others.
- Recognizing that some values may be situation specific while others are not.
- Asking not only 'What should I do?' but also 'What sort of person should I be?' Realizing that not only actions but beliefs, intentions, feelings and qualities of character also constitute morality. Developing and holding to one's own ideas of 'right' and 'good' even if they are unconventional.
- Understanding and/or reconciling conflicts in moral situations between the principles of justice and care, and the variance in one's own life between broadly held beliefs and concepts and situation-specific action.
- Questioning the moral values of religious traditions, including one's own, in order to clarify the links between moral thinking, feeling and action and the beliefs and practices of institutional religion. Understanding and appreciating the relative truth of one's own religious and spiritual beliefs; beginning to see the local, time-restricted context in which such ideas evolved.
- Recognizing the complexity of self, other people and the world and beginning to abandon or rethink previously held answers and solutions. Balancing the personal perspective with the inter-personal, social and global one. Seeing oneself in a broader context and responding to this bigger picture.

- Being prepared to move into new territory while recognizing that this 'new territory' may be a familiar one for other people.
- Exploring new language and ways of self-expression. Trying to explain complicated or previously unexpressed ideas and feelings.
- Tolerating and/or bearing pain, disappointment, sorrow and loss. Realizing that life can continue after such experiences.
- Recognizing, however briefly, one's own finitude and taking that into account in future life plans.
- Acquiring and/or formulating a philosophy of life for the present period of one's life and adapting and/or abandoning it at a later period.

In this chapter I will explore how far these aspects of development are apparent in my respondents by presenting the data collected under three themes: human development over time, inter-relationship between bereavement and school life, and moral and spiritual development. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be presented together and, as far as possible, quotations from respondents will be used to illustrate their ideas.

### **What kind of stories do the four teenagers tell?**

In order to explore how typical are the experiences of Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity (16-17 year olds whose parent and/or sibling died), I shall try to set their stories against information obtained from other groups. I want to see what difference a bereavement (whether of parent, sibling, grandparent, other relative, friend etc) makes to thinking, feelings and behaviour which I term moral and spiritual development. I shall try to take 'snapshots' of different people at different ages (while recognising that they have lived through different local, national and international situations such as World War II) in order to explore the differences that the passage of time and such things as religious upbringing make.

Rita and Verity, who are close friends, were bereaved at primary school and in their conversation with me they referred to each other. Although Sheila referred to Rita, Rita did not refer to her, and Thelma's bereavement was not mentioned by either Rita, Verity or Sheila which is not surprising as we shall see from her story.

- Sheila's *mother* died when she was 3 or 4 and she does not mention the death of any other person.
- Rita's *brother* died when she was 6, her *father* died when she was 8, and her paternal grandmother died when she was 16.
- Verity's *sister* died when she was 10 and her great grandmother died when she was 12.
- Thelma's grandfather died when she was 4, and her grandmother, father's uncle and *brother* all died when she was 13.

These four teenagers experienced a particular kind of loss at a particular time in their lives and, in that sense, are typical of no-one else, but some parts of their stories may be similar to those that others would have told if I had been able to ask them. They may represent the extreme end of a continuum - both in terms of the loss experienced and their reactions to it - and it is possible that other pupils are at varying points along that same continuum. Although they are the same age and have all been bereaved of a family member, each girl has lost a different relation at a different stage in her life and has been bereaved for a different length of time. Furthermore, because they have all been in the same school year cohort, it might be tempting to consider that they will have similar stories to tell about school, but this is not so since each one has been affected by physiological development and educational events - such as exams - occurring at different times in the grieving process.

Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity are older than all the other school age respondents (Hester Primary Year 5; Maxwell Secondary Year 7; Maxwell Secondary School Year 10) but are only 3-4 years younger than the youngest of

the adult respondents (aged 21). They can be seen as mid-way in the developmental process from childhood to adulthood, having completed their compulsory education but not yet entered the world of employment. They are undergoing further education, as many young people of their age also do, and are legal minors in most respects. However, they have had an experience while at school that many of their peers have not had - and now never will have - and can describe the deaths that occurred 12-13, 10, 8, 7 and 3-4 years previously and evaluate their impact. Many of the adults in my study are also able to look back to the death of a parent or sibling and talk about how they felt and thought *when they were the same age* as these four respondents and their retrospective views may illuminate those of the four teenagers.

It is also interesting to compare responses from Years 5, 7 and 10 because some data indicates frequency of bereavement, type of loss and different responses within a four year span across primary and secondary levels (9-12 years) and other data will indicate similar material within a 5 year span at secondary level (11-15 years). However, not all comparisons are possible since Hester Year 5 did not complete the same questionnaires as the other two age groups and more data overall was collected from Maxwell Year 7. Further in-depth views will also be presented from 5 of the 15 interviewees (aged 5-16 years) who are children of friends and colleagues (Jennifer, Lionel, Melanie, Rosemary and Timothy).

As explained in chapter 6, all adult interview and questionnaire respondents whose ideas I have cited have been assigned names as well as 1 pupil in Maxwell Year 7 (Primrose) and 3 pupils in Maxwell Year 10 (Aileen, Beryl and Charles). (See Appendix 8 for a full list of respondents mentioned in this chapter.)

The three broad themes described in chapter 6, which encompass the range of questions asked, will be used to explore the data in depth: (1) personal development over time; (2) interaction between bereavement and school events and (3) moral and spiritual development.

## THEME ONE: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME

### Family situation

Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity, who were in the same year cohort at Winston Secondary School, had experienced 3 sibling deaths and 2 parent deaths.

**Table 7.1** Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity: circumstances of bereavement

Name of bereaved	Age when bereaved	Who died and how old	How deceased died
Rita	(a) 6	(a) older brother, Walter, when 8	(a) road accident
	(b) 8	(b) father when 36	(b) on railway line
Sheila	3-4	mother when 34	suicide at home
Thelma	13	older brother, Aaron, when 17	crossing bypass after celebrating 17th birthday
Verity	10	new-born sister, Dawn	premature stillborn

Sheila's bereavement is unusual because it involves a mother's death at an early age and from suicide. Fewer women than men die in their thirties and suicide is less common among women than men generally. For example, 0.4 females and 0.9 males per thousand died in the 25-34 age group in 1992 in England and Wales (Office of Population Census and Surveys, No 19, 1992) while 903 female and 3049 male deaths were recorded as suicide and self-inflicted injury in 1992 (Office of Population Census and Surveys, No 18, 1992). In addition to the death of Sheila's mother, other data from respondents in my small scale sample also contradicted the national pattern: the mothers of two school friends of Melanie (aged 12) had died from illness (cancer) and accident (road traffic), and Candida (aged 39) and Pansy (aged 25) each reported the suicides of 20-21 year old female friends. Rita also knew of three other pupils who had experienced the

death of a parent or sibling: the sister of Alison (friend of boyfriend) died from asthma, the father of Blanche (friend at Winston school) died of a heart attack and the brother of Clive (friend at Winston school) died of suicide or an accident.

Although this thesis is not concerned with the impact of non-human deaths, animals will be included in the data that follows and twice elsewhere in this chapter because of the numbers involved and the indication by respondents that such deaths are significant.

**Table 7.2** Years 7 and 10: number of deaths experienced

Age and number	Parent, Step-parent	Sibling, Step Sibling	Grand-parent	Other relation	Friend	Neighbour	Pet
Maxwell School Year 7 (n=66)	1	7	68	44	16	16	50
Maxwell School Year 10 (n=18)	2	1	18	12	7	5	14

One pupil in Year 7 mentioned her mother's miscarriage and another mentioned his aunt's miscarriage and, since these events were seen by those respondents as the death of a potential sibling or cousin, I have included them in those categories.

Aileen (aged 15), who lives with foster parents, indicated five deaths: her friend (at 6 years), her father (at 7 years), her paternal grandfather (at 8 years), a neighbour (at 9 years) and her sister (at 14 years). Although she is not typical, she does represent a small number of pupils who experience many losses during their years of compulsory schooling and, in this respect, her story is more extreme than any of the four teenagers I interviewed.

## Siblings

I interviewed Lionel (aged 7) who was born two years after his brother, Martin, died in 1986. Lionel has an older brother, Neville (aged 12) who was 3 when Martin died, but who declined to be interviewed. I explored how Lionel thought about his unknown deceased brother.

VC: Any thoughts on what the family might have been like if he [Martin] hadn't died? There'd be you three, I suppose... What do you think it would have been like to have him around?

Lionel: Well, it would be like, if I broke up with my brother [Neville] - my *oldest* brother - I'd always have Martin. And I've always wished he was alive.

VC: Have you?

Lionel: Yes.

...

VC: I guess your brother misses Martin. I think - what do you think he feels about Martin?

Lionel: Well, I think he's a bit disappointed about it and in a different way about me.

VC: About you?

Lionel: Yeah.

The feeling of being a poor replacement for a deceased sibling is always likely, especially in quite young children, although parents and other siblings may say that this is not so - and truly mean it. Three pupils in Hester Year 5 also told me that a sibling had died before they were born.

Sheila says she is glad she is an only child because

if I had to have a brother or sister I'd have loved it to be a small one so that I - I think I'd feel threatened if that person had *known* mum. That would sort of make me think: "Well, that's not fair. You knew her and I didn't."

I asked Rita, Verity and Thelma how the loss of their sibling had affected their lives. Rita says that losing her brother when she was 6 changed her life "in a big way" because "every now and again I look back and wish, oh I wish my brother was here," and also "because my mum has got closer to me." She says she sometimes feels very lonely now that she is an only child, and this feeling may have been exacerbated by her mother's remarriage when she was 12. Verity says, "It would be nice really to have [had] a little sister to take out and look after," and "we [the family] might have got on better because there would have been

someone else to shout at." Thelma says her brother's death "was really the most traumatic thing that changed my life totally" and although she does not actually say that she misses Aaron, her responses to his death (visiting the grave daily for the first year, spending a lot of time with his friends and, more recently, staying in a great deal) indicate that she does.

Verity also talks about how she gets on with her younger sibling, Alistair (aged 15). She says that the relationship has gone through four phases: they got on "really well when they were young"; then they "hated each other until Dawn's death;" then, "during that time we got on well"; then, when she was "about 12 we started hating each other" again. She acknowledges that falling out with siblings is "part of growing up" but thinks that, despite this tendency, Dawn's death brought them closer together for a while.

### **Important people and things**

Rita says that her mother, her step-father, her boyfriend, Verity and other friends are the most important people in her life. She also names happiness (and remembers listing this in an essay she wrote when she started secondary school) and "living for the moment." She explains the latter idea as follows:

Because, you know, time goes so quickly, doesn't it? You don't realise how it goes but it does and that's why it's important. Plus the fact that you don't know how long you're going to be here so you've got to really go for it in doing the things you want to do.

Thelma says her parents and some friends are the most important people in her life and that being content is important. She mentions a dog which she seems fond of, and names important future plans as: gaining hairdressing qualifications, learning to drive, getting a good job and earning money.

I did not directly ask Sheila or Verity about important people and things. From their conversations I would guess that Sheila's father is more important than her

step-mother - although both are probably valued for different reasons - and that her boyfriend and then a wide group of friends are significant. Verity is obviously closer to her mother than to her father, and despite him being "a nightmare," probably values her brother also. She is engaged to her boyfriend and names many friends with whom she spends her time. Neither of them mentioned pets but this may be because I only spoke to each of them twice.

Eighty-seven percent of 62 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 indicated that their family (especially parents) are important to them, and of the 12.4% that indicated important non-family members, only friends, boyfriends and girlfriends were mentioned. When asked "What else is important to you or of value?" 41 (38 girls and 3 boys) out of 56 pupils named pets and animals. This response seems a clear indication of the overwhelming attachment that young people have to their pets since, by contrast, the next highest score was only 6 for school activities. In fact, Rita's father died while saving their pet cocker spaniel from injury on a railway line.

When pets die people may respond to the loss with deep sorrow (as I shall show later regarding children and young people) and Edith, a married 40 year old PGCE student who cited the deaths of 4 grandparents, 2 aunts, 2 friends and 1 neighbour, named the death of her cat two years previously as the most significant because "losing the cat was like losing one of our children."

### **Emotional thoughts and feelings at the time of the death and now**

Regarding the deaths of her brother 10 years ago and father 8 years ago Rita says:

At the time ... it just didn't seem real. ... I was sort of - was a bit shocked for a while - and then, I suppose, it didn't really sink in, so I didn't understand what had happened - only that they were gone...

I asked her to explain the word 'blurry' which she used several times to describe that period of her life:

Rita: Yeah, it's just a sort of - the time after both deaths - everything sort of - I seemed to forget everything about that. ... there's a block where I can't remember much about what happened. So that's why I used 'blurry.'

VC: ... How long, would you say, this sort of blurry life lasted?

Rita: Do you mean when it began to sink in?

VC: Well, there are two things there. One is becoming aware of life around you... school and friends and whatever- and the other one is the implications, the remaining as you call it, the sinking in of the importance...

Rita: ...Um, the death sinking in, I think that took quite a - quite a while - you know, half a year maybe, just for it to actually sink in because I was so young, I didn't understand. So it took a long time for this - you know, once I realised they were gone, they didn't come back in the house, it started to really sink in. ... About my friends in school, I suppose I tried to carry on as normal.

Rita suggests that the first few months after both deaths - particularly the first six months after her father died - passed in a blur or daze because of her inability to understand what the losses meant. She also notes a change over time in conversations with her mother: "We used to talk about it a lot but - now - we don't seem to," and mainly attributes this to her growing up. She says she is "beginning to understand things a bit better," and has "wider experience" and knowledge of "other beliefs" and "other theories." She also acknowledges: "I don't think about it every day - not now."

Verity says that her sister's death "was quite a shock when it happened" but "because I didn't know her, it doesn't hurt so much." When she later left the church (see theme 3) she thinks it was because she wanted to be angry with someone and could not blame her family or God. Recently her mother's best friend had a baby girl which reminded her of Dawn and although she knows her parents do not want to talk about it, she says: "It would be nice just to know how they feel."

When Sheila's father told her that her mother had committed suicide she "didn't take it in, because at 11 you're still quite young to take that sort of thing in." During the last 2-3 years though, Sheila has started to question why her mother did it and she says she sometimes gets depressed and moody - "very sort of

uptight." She is affected by anniversary dates (mother's birthday and the anniversary of her death) saying: "I think the only reason I think about it so much is because there are so many questions unanswered."

Thelma says the time immediately after Aaron's death "felt like a dream" and that a newspaper account which implied he had been drunk or 'playing chicken' (see theme 2) had made her angry. She says the adage that time heals is not true because "I think you just learn to live with it, learn how to cope." She describes how she copes by keeping her feelings separate from her thoughts and words:

Thelma: I can talk about it but - I don't know if this makes sense but - talk about it as if I'm another person. It's not actually me.

VC: Uhum. Is that what you're doing now, do you think?

Thelma: Yeah. Yes, I know I am.

VC: Right.

Thelma: Yeah, so, I mean, when I'm talking about it I'm not feeling any hurt about what's happened. I'm just giving answers of what I can remember. With no emotional attachment.

Rita, Thelma and Verity describe the early part of their bereavement as "blurry," "like a dream," and "quite a shock." Nor surprisingly Sheila also found it hard to "take in" new details of her mother's death 8 years after it happened and her bereavement entered another phase at that point. Both Thelma and Verity acknowledge their anger at a later stage in the grieving process. Currently, Sheila ongoingly seeks answers for herself, Thelma copes by isolating her feelings, Verity is reminded by another birth, and Rita seems to have learnt to forget her losses.

Despite Thelma's protest that time does not heal, I think the different reactions of the four teenagers are linked to the passage of time in some way. Rita's two significant bereavements occurred when she was a child - and her reactions to both have merged in her memory - and Verity says that only particular conversations or events remind her of her sister. However, Sheila's loss was a vague memory until she learnt new facts that changed her perception of it, and Thelma's loss is complicated by a range of factors: the type of death, the age of

the deceased, the stories circulating about the cause of the accident, and the short time since the death.

Rita sees the years containing the deaths as that part of her life completed so far and her retrospective view of her own grieving process may indicate why Thelma is so deeply affected by her loss.

I mean, suppose if I was older and it happened now, I could come to terms with it quicker but I'd probably grieve longer. Because I was so young then I didn't - I didn't understand what was happening - I suppose I just got on with my life and tried not to think about it. But as, if something happened *now* it would be constantly on my mind - for a long time I would imagine.

...

And, um, it would be harder now because I would have known them longer so it would have hurt me more. But whereas then, I can hardly remember them.

The views of Maxwell Year 7 and 10 pupils about their emotions early in bereavement may supplement the ideas discussed above. (Some pupils named more than one emotion.)

**Table 7.3** Years 7 and 10: early bereavement emotions

Group & number	upset	sad	angry annoyed	lonely	awful, bad	shocked, confused, disbelief
Year 7 (n=44)	15 = 34%	20 = 45%	9 = 20%	2 = 4.5%	2 = 4.5%	1 = 2.2%
Year 10 (n=13)	2 = 15%	5 = 38%	0	1 = 7.6%	0	5 = 38%

One girl and 1 boy in Year 7 admitted that they cried and Beryl (aged 15) was surprised because she did not. Aileen (aged 15) writes that she blamed herself for her father's death (when 7) because "I thought it was something I had done" and Sheila also says that, when she saw her father crying some time after her mother's death (when 3-4), "I couldn't work out what I'd done."

Overall, there is a sense that pupils move on in their grieving from 'then' to 'now' as emotion and cognitive reasoning replace a focus on emotion only, as indicated below.

**Table 7.4** Years 7 and 10: later bereavement emotions

How do you think or feel now?	Year 7 (n=33)	Year 10 (n=13)
Sad	4 = 12%	
"Still" miss/ sad/upset	7 = 21%	
"Sometimes" sad	2 = 6%	
Wishes and questions (wish had spent more time with; why did it happen)	2 = 6%	1 = 7.6%
Partial resolution (have memories but have to get on with things)	3 = 9%	
Moral beliefs (happy now and not in pain; in a better place; it was for the best)	3	
Practical activity/event (gran getting married again; got another pet; going to do healthy things)	3	
Don't think about it/learnt to live with it	3	1
OK/alright/relieved		5 = 38%
Don't know/nothing	6 = 18%	6 = 46%

There seems to be a tendency among older pupils to play down their feelings (eg: "Don't know" = 46%), which may be an inevitable response to an increasing number of losses. For example, Aileen (aged 15) says that she felt "all alone" when her father died because "I loved him and we were very close" but, regarding her present feelings, writes: "I think I've learnt to live with it." Charles (aged 15) who is adopted, was "very confused and unbelieved [sic]" when his paternal grandmother died (his dog died 3 days later), but says he is now "relieved."

Sandra (aged 44) reiterates Thelma's idea that "you just learn to live with it" as well as the view expressed in chapter 5 regarding long term adaptation rather than a 'return to baseline.' Her father died when she was 14, and she writes:

I do not find it relevant to speak of 'recovery' from grief, but it is possible to learn the life-skills, such as the ability to take risks, to care, and to value oneself, though much later in life than is normal among the non-bereaved.

Poignantly, she adds: "I tend to suspect the non-bereaved of superficiality."

I explored ways of remembering the dead over time with Years 5 and 10 and their replies fell into three categories. The majority (20) suggested tangible forms (photos/films/tape recordings, flowers, possessions, grave visits) which can be used regularly over time. Ten suggested forms of prayer and 11 named funeral practices. The first two methods are ongoing while the third mostly occurs in the early stages of the grieving process.

An increase in ways of marking the scene of a death seems to have developed following the Hillsborough football disaster. A teacher at a London secondary school told me that pupils placed flowers, significant items and some possessions of a deceased pupil against the wall from which he had fallen and died (Shipman, personal communication, 1995).

## Effect of bereavement on relationships with family members

The perceptions of Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity about family relationships after the death of their parent or sibling are given below.

**Table 7.5** Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity: family relationships after a death

Name	Mother	Father	Sibling	Step-parent
Rita	We became really close; I tell her almost everything	deceased	deceased	I really like him; we're very close; I don't compare them (father & step-father) in any way
Sheila	deceased	We're very close; he's the person I run to	none	She feels very left out but accepts it; she is anti-education; we have arguments; if I can't please her by getting a job at least I can get out from under her feet
Thelma	We were always close; got a lot closer	I've drifted apart from him; he doesn't say what he feels; he has mood swings	deceased	n/a
Verity	We just never talk about it	We don't get on, I've almost left home; it's because we're so alike	During that time we got on well; I've never heard him mention it at all; he's a real pain	n/a

Both Rita and Sheila have good relationship with their surviving parent and, of her relationship with her mother, Rita says:

After my dad died, I remember when, that's when we became really close, because when my brother died, my mum had my father to lean on. But I think that she was, we were [already] leaning on each other then.

Sheila thinks her father "tried to make up for everything because mum wasn't there" by spending a lot of time with her but ,when he remarried, she "hated" her step-mother "because I had to start sharing my Dad with someone else."

Both Thelma and Verity have parents who prefer not to talk about the death of their dead child. Thelma's seventeenth birthday will also be on a Friday in June as her brother's was, and she says her mother is "really paranoid about it" and that, although her father "hasn't said anything" she knows he will "be concerned." She is not afraid that she will die on the day after her birthday (as Aaron did) but knows her birthday will make it "quite awkward in our family this year." She humorously suggests: "I'm feeling I'm going to be locked up for those two days, you know!" Despite her cool relationship with her father, Thelma says that after her brother's death she appreciated her parents much more "because you always expect your parents and family to be there, don't you?"

Verity says of her parents, "they're not the sort of people to discuss their feelings ... we're not very close." She says that after Dawn's death

when you talked about it it was as if it never happened but it did. Mum never really discusses it, I don't know why... I know I'd want to talk about it if it was me.

I think it is possible to conjecture that, for a time, both Rita and Sheila 'replaced' their deceased parent in the life of their surviving parent because there were no other family members except themselves. By contrast, both Thelma and Verity were excluded from their parents' shared grieving and can only talk intermittently to their mothers. Both their fathers reinforce the sexual stereotypes of withdrawn, uncommunicative men.

Thirty-seven pupils in Maxwell Years 7 and 10 indicated how they thought they had got on with their families after a death although there is no indication who "family" refers to.

**Table 7.6** Years 7 and 10: family relationships after a death

Group & number	positive	negative	uncertain
Year 7 (n=27)	16 = 59.2%	6 = 22.2%	5 = 18.5%
Year 10 (n=10)	5 = 50%	2 = 20%	3 = 30%

Positive replies ranged from simply "OK" to "They comforted me," and negative replies included: annoyed, "not very well", "terrible, but I got over it" and "my parents were a bit stressed out." At least 50% indicated positive family relationships but it is useful to note that Aileen (aged 15) comments: "Not very well. I got very naughty." Olga (aged 78) remembers that, much to her irritation, after her brother's death when she was 7 her mother became very protective and worried if she was a few minutes late from school.

**Effect of bereavement on relationships with people who are not family**

As already indicated, Sheila says that she sometimes gets depressed and moody and that her friends have learnt to leave her alone because "probably I'm thinking about mum." Mainly, however, she is outgoing and confident and not swayed by the opinions of her friends. Thelma says that after Aaron died she stayed out with his friends every night until late because her mother "was going through such a bad stage, I mean, she just sort of let me run wild." This situation lasted for a few months until her mother

suddenly *realised* things were getting out of hand so I crawled back into line and I didn't go out any more and then, when I was about 15 [June 1993], I started going out every night again and ever since, since about last summer [1994], I haven't really gone out.

She has few friends and describes herself as "reserved" but I suggest that her lack of self-confidence may also be related to experiencing a sudden untimely death and coping with the rumours arising from it. Rita and Verity mention each other as sources of comfort and Sheila also mentions Rita in this respect. The fact that the graves of Rita's brother and Verity's sister are side by side has also encouraged their mutual support.

Sheila continues to talk about her mother's suicide to a small and trusted group of friends, Rita and Verity have been mutually supportive of each other because they are old friends but Thelma shares her grieving with few or no friends. This picture might indicate that, generally, school is not seen by bereaved pupils as an appropriate context for discussions of death with friends.

In the findings below from Maxwell Years 7 and 10 there seems to be a greater tendency for younger pupils to be angry with other people, particularly their peers. This may be because older pupils become better at responding to each other as more of them experience loss or learn to live with it.

**Table 7.7** Years 7 and 10: relationships with friends and other people after a death

How did you get on with other people?	Year 7 (n=25)	Year 10 (n=12)
OK/fine/ the same	11 = 44%	7 = 58%
Better than before		1 = 8%
Nobody talked to me/ They didn't understand	1 = 4%	1
Annoyed/ angry/ moody	7 = 28%	
I didn't tell/ They didn't know	2 = 8%	
No difference	2	1
Don't know/remember	2	2 = 16%

## **Whether the death affected personality, behaviour, creativity or interests**

Rita has memories of specific moments and periods of time that indicate changed behaviour and interests. After Walter's death she remembers a time when "I used to stay in and watch TV all the time" but, at the family gathering after her father's funeral, she vividly remembers sitting with her teddy-bear "just being quite happy - I didn't seem to understand." When she went back to school after her father's death she thinks she was "a bit quieter for a while" but has since learnt to be "a bit louder than usual because I want attention." Later still she "started reading more" and "became a real reader, a book worm," particularly of literature on near death experiences (NDE) and spiritualism.

Sheila's personality seems influenced by several issues related to her mother. She sometimes becomes moody and depressed thinking about her mother's death but has become "a very independent person" because of her father's admonition: "If you want to do something, go out and do it but be sensible about it." She also describes herself as

quite a happy bright sort of person, so I tend not to think about things [mother's suicide] that are going to make me down.

and seems pleased that her mother's sister tells her that her "outgoing, loud, sort of fun" personality resembles her mother's.

Thelma also began to read about NDEs and spiritualism after her brother's death. Since then she seems to have avoided confrontations and making difficult situations which may have hindered the development of her self-confidence. She admits that it is easier to stay home reading magazines and watching television rather than face the world, although she doesn't know why.

I mean, a friend of mine keeps asking me to go out in Southtown and I arrange to go and then, I don't know, I get all panicky about going. I don't know why. And then I put it off and cancel...

Verity seems to have a poor self-image which she feeds by comparing herself with her dead sister.

I think I felt guilty in a way that I was still here because I've made a lot of mistakes. I'm only 17 but there are things I wish I hadn't done. I feel guilty that she isn't here to have a nice life... I think that maybe she should be here enjoying herself because she would be better than me.

...  
Just recently I hurt myself all the time, it's a really stupid thing to do. I think I do it for attention.

She also says she is glad Rita has "been there" for her because she has "done many stupid things like trying to kill myself."

It would seem that Rita became a bookworm and, first quieter, then louder after her bereavements. Sheila goes out a lot socially, is independent and moody, while Thelma is reserved and prefers to stay at home. Verity is inclined to blame herself for living instead of her sister and sometimes harms herself.

It is difficult to evaluate oneself retrospectively in questionnaires without the kind of prompting that an interview involves and the small number of examples offered by this method may reflect that difficulty. Of 48 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 who answered whether changed behaviour or personality had occurred after bereavement, 43.7% (16 girls and 5 boys) replied yes, giving 15 examples:

- positive attitude towards self (1 example: to be more healthy)
- aware of change in self when speaking to other people (1 example: sometimes I go on about them a lot)
- positive attitude towards other people (6 examples, eg: to be understanding and good; I understand what they feel like; to act more sensibly)
- negative attitude towards self (7 examples, eg: not my cheerful self; didn't want to do anything; went off my food; very angry; didn't talk that much).

Of the 43 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 who answered whether changed creativity or interests had occurred, 13.9% said yes, but only 3 pupils (2 girls and 1 boy) explained further:

- negative (boy: couldn't concentrate; girl: stopped doing things for a while)
- positive (girl: made me want to keep fit).

In Maxwell Year 10 also a small number said yes to this question (21% of 14 pupils). Two pupils explained changes which occurred during the last year: Charles started stamp collecting after his paternal grandmother's death and Beryl wrote that after her paternal grandmother died she was:

A lot quieter and less courageous. I draw a lot now as well as doing loads of things. I draw really strange things.

Despite the fact that only 27 pupils (37.5%) in Year 7 and 3 pupils (17.6%) in Year 10 replied to these questions, I think the examples show that young people can be aware of changes in their disposition and energy levels when a loved one dies, especially if the death is recent.

### **Whether the death affected thinking about important things or views of life**

Thelma says she appreciates her parents much more now because she knows that "one day they're not going to be there - or perhaps I might go first." She says she is

not so bothered about my own life. ... generally, life on the whole, I'm not fussed about. But with my parents I am.

Her short term plans are concerned with studying for a career after playing truant for so long (see theme 2) although she describes the prospect of her future life as "bleak" and "boring to think that you've got to get up every morning and do things that you don't want to do." However, she says she will cope with this feeling because

In the past when things got too bad I could always bale out [play truant] but now I can't, I've got to stick it - what I'm doing [college] - because if I don't, I'll be up the creek basically! ... I've got to take more responsibility for my actions or things will backfire on me.

She says that she has "learnt to accept that if things are going to happen, they're going to happen" and that she will never find out the answers to some of her questions about life "until I die myself."

Verity, who is unhappy at her academic progress, says that her present stage of life "has got to be the worst stage" and she seems to reflect this thinking in a short to medium term view:

Life just seems a real drag to me, I'm sorry. Some days it's good. I'd like to have something that I know I can work or live for but if I haven't I just wonder what the hell am I doing it for, what's the point?

However, after describing an elderly depressed woman in the residential home where she works part-time, she adopts a longer term perspective and declares:

I don't want to go like that. It just seems pointless. You can have a rubbish childhood, and maybe things will get better and you get married, employed, and work your way up and all that, and then it just stops again. And then you sit and wait around...  
VC: ... What might be the biggest rule in your life, in terms of what you must do or must not do?  
Verity: You've just got to make what you can of it. You've got to enjoy it while you can but you know sometimes it doesn't count for anything. But life's what you make it, really, isn't it? If you want it to be good, then it will be good.

By contrast Sheila and Rita seem more positive about life. Sheila describes it as:

a challenge. It's there to be lived, it's not there to sort of dawdle past you and I like to think that I do take advantage of it. Saying 'What's the purpose of life?' everyone's got different opinions on that one. My opinion: "Live for the moment. If you want to do something, don't let - within reason - don't let anyone hold you back."

I asked Rita how far the fear of dying that she had previously expressed was linked with the deaths of her brother and father.

Rita: A lot I would say. Because I wouldn't - if I hadn't experienced that then I would never really have thought about it. ... I mean, that's the sort of thing you think about when you're really old, isn't it! Not my age, so - if they hadn't have died I wouldn't have thought about it hardly at all. It has had a lot of influence on the way I think.  
VC: How has it changed either the way you think or the way you live your life?  
Rita: ... As we were saying before, because I've experienced death it's made me grow up a bit quicker than I thought I would. ... I've realised how important

it is to live my life now than to be dwelling on the past and being depressed about it because if you do that then you won't - you won't go anywhere, I don't think. You've got to live your life for the moment.

It would seem that Thelma has a present-focused "bleak" view of a future in which she must take responsibility for her own actions and do things she does not want to do. Verity is slightly further on in her perspective, balanced between a present pessimistic view of life and an optimistic one that life can be made into what she wants it to be. Rita thinks that her bereavement experiences caused her to "grow up a bit quicker" than she expected and Sheila's perception of life as "a challenge" may parallel Rita's experience. Both Sheila and Rita express apparently hedonistic views ("live for the moment" and "how important it is to live my life now") which may result from the belief that in the past they faced some challenging events.

In a similar way, 39% of 46 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 said that the death of great grandparents, grandparents, uncles and neighbours had made them think differently about the things that were important to them or the way they looked at life (see also chapter 5). Although only 6 (5 girls and 1 boy) explained further, their answers fall into 3 categories:

- awareness of self (2 examples: made me think if it was me; made me enjoy life)
- awareness of other people (2 examples: I thought just how precious people are and that they need a lot of attention; realised that everyone has to die sometime).
- awareness of life in general (2 examples: made me think about how life is; made me realise how important life is).

Although they are a small sample of the whole year group (8%) - and perhaps represent only those with the ability and willingness to write about their experiences and thinking - I suggest that their replies indicate the beginning of an awareness of the fragility and specialness of life at 11-12 years. Adults who

answered this question regarding the death of someone close before they were aged 19 also gave longer-term retrospective responses reiterating these three themes.

### ***Awareness of self***

Gavin (aged 45) says the death of his mother at 15

Reinforced my natural tendency to conceal and hide away feelings and construct something of a false front to face the world. Reinforced a sense of pessimism.

### ***Awareness of other people***

Henry, a psychotherapist (aged 58) reflects on the deaths of his grandfather (when 7), pet (when 8) and friend (when 11):

I think [they] prepared me for dealing with more painful loss later in life and as an empathic base for helping others.

### ***Awareness of life in general***

Hannah (aged 21) whose fiancée is the brother of a friend who died when she was 16, writes:

I appreciate the people close to me a lot more and make the most of opportunities as I know that death can occur at any age. ... I feel that experiencing the death of a younger person affects your outlook more than the death of an elderly person.

## **Overview of personal development over time**

Although no easy explanations can be suggested from the data offered so far, I think four factors are likely to be important.

First, the length of time the child or young person has been in the bereaved role is significant since grieving and other activities or events such as school life can conflict. Rita, Verity and Sheila were bereaved (or told the details of their bereavement) before their mid-teens and consequently did not have to put their

cognitive and emotional energies into both grieving and secondary school work, as Thelma did when 13. (See next section for further comments.) Furthermore, it is unsettling if a family member suddenly dies, especially (as in Thelma's case) if she or he had existed all one's life. By contrast, Rita's relationship with her brother lasted 6 years, and with her father 8 years (half her present lifespan); Sheila's relationship lasted 2 or 3 years and Verity's relationship never existed in the flesh.

Second, the age of the child or young person at the time of death also seems important. Having the protection of an adult when young and not being fully aware of the characteristics of death (irreversibility, universality, non-functionality) or the many philosophical and religious explanations about death may, as Rita suggests, actually make it easier to cope if bereaved when young rather than when older.

Third, common themes in the stories of Rita and Sheila and Thelma and Verity also suggest that family dynamics both before and after the death are influential. Perhaps there is a greater tendency for parents to draw closer together when a child dies than for the whole family to do so, and for the loss of one parent to draw the other parent and children together. For Thelma and Verity, in particular, the not-so-good relationships they had with their fathers did not improve after the death of their siblings.

A fourth factor is idiographic development, shown in the disposition or personality of individuals and their attitude to life. Rita sees herself to be growing in confidence while Verity is aware she lacks self-esteem. Sheila describes herself as independent and Thelma says she is reserved. Each of these views of oneself - and therefore of the world one inhabits - will vary under different circumstances, as will the effect of the death of a loved one on such views.

## THEME 2: INTER-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BEREAVEMENT AND SCHOOL LIFE

### Bereavement as a significant life event

I asked Rita, Sheila and Thelma to divide their lives into chapters and, when they did so, each one used the death of a relative to end the first chapter. It is interesting that although Rita has lost both her brother and her father she sees her life divided into only two chapters by her father's death at the mid-way point - perhaps because the "blurry" events of her brother's death have merged into those of her father's.

**Table 7.8** Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity: 'chapters' of their lives so far

Name	1st chapter	2nd chapter	3rd chapter	4th chapter
Rita	birth-8 years: ends with father's death	8 years-now: living alone with mother; mother's remarriage; staying on at school; taking A levels		
Sheila	birth-3/4 years: ends with mother's death	3/4-7 years: when Aunt Constance lived with her and her father	7-11 years: from father's remarriage until when told of suicide	11 years- now: making sense of mother's death; taking A levels
Thelma	birth-13 years: ends with brother's death	13-16 years: from brother's death until left school	16 years- now: college life and getting hairdressing qualifications	

Thelma says that if Aaron had not died she would probably have had "about fifty different chapters" of "all the things that aren't important." For her the most important *decision* she ever made was whether to leave school and go to college because of her fear of going "into a room with people I didn't know." Apart from

the death of a relative, other significant turning-points named by these three teenagers are a parent's remarriage, learning the details of a death, and leaving school. By way of comparison I generated 7 categories from 41 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 who listed "the most important thing that had happened to you in your life so far" and 6 categories from 17 adults (21-44 years) who described 'turning-points' in their lives.

Nearly 22% of Maxwell Year 7 named a death as the most important event, as shown below:

- happiness (16 examples, eg: being a bridesmaid; getting a cat; meeting someone to love; buying Lego)
- death (9 examples of sibling, grandparent and pet)
- growing up (6 examples, eg: getting a job)
- exciting (5 examples, eg: visiting EuroDisney)
- upsetting (4 examples, eg: parents rowing or divorcing)
- frightening (2 examples, eg: aeroplane flight)
- funny (1 example: 'male' guinea pig having babies)

Careers and personal relationships seem most important to adults and, interestingly, all the deaths cited were of a parent (when aged 9, 14, 20, 22, 28 and 29):

- entering higher education and making career choices (9 examples)
- relationship with partner/spouse and children (9 examples)
- death of a family member (6 examples)
- change in religious commitment (3 examples)
- relationship with parent (1 example)
- travelling (1 example)

Although it is not surprising that 2 respondents considered the death of a parent important when they were at school, that 4 others did so when they were at

college, pursuing a career or married may indicate the impact of a parent's death even in adulthood.

**Frequency of bereavement while at school**

Only 68% of pupils in Maxwell Year 7 ( $n = 151$ ) indicated the age at which particular deaths occurred so the data on frequency by age is incomplete. However, even from these figures, there is an indication (as is to be expected) that the awareness of bereavement increases with age.

**Table 7.9 Year 7: age at which deaths occurred**

Age	Number of deaths
1	4
2	3
3	5
4	5
5	12
6	8
7	7
8	12
9	21
10	26
11	25
12	23

These figures could indicate that nearly everyone in each of the three Year 7 classes at Maxwell School that I spoke to (containing 24-25 pupils) had experienced the death of a human or pet within the previous year.

**Importance of the death**

Of the five categories commonly used to describe death (natural anticipated, natural unanticipated, accidental, suicide and murder), the third, fourth and fifth are the most difficult to accept because of their untimely and sudden nature, and

even the notion of 'natural' death may be challenged when a baby dies due to illness or defect. Rita and Thelma lost their relatives through accidents, Sheila lost her mother through suicide, and Verity's baby sister was stillborn.

Verity acknowledges that part of the importance of Dawn's death is 'missing what might have been' and Rita, who says that the deaths of her father and brother were "really unacceptable" because they were both so young, argues:

My brother had hardly lived when he died, so what was the point of him being born in the first place?

Thelma admits that "you expect your grandparents to die" and adds:

I know you expect young people to die but not - your brother - and not three close people in your family within two years.

Although Sheila is not troubled by unfulfilled hopes as Verity is or the death of people in their youth as Rita and Thelma are, she simply cannot understand why anyone should choose to take her or his life or how suicide "solves anything."

Of the 66 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 who wrote about the importance of a death, 42.4% cited their grandparents' deaths and 28.7% their pet's (or pets' ) deaths. All other citations of less likely deaths were in single figures (eg: 4 = friend and 1 = sister) and the pupil whose father had died declined to answer this question. This response probably reflects the likely frequency of such events rather than emotional attachment to the deceased.

Reasons given in Maxwell Year 7 by 23 pupils (20 Female, 3 male) for the importance or significance of the death categorised by key words or themes are:

- feelings and relationships (14 examples, eg: was close to her; meant a lot to me)
- time spent with deceased (7 examples, eg: spent a lot of time or did not spend enough time with)

- contexts (2 examples, eg: only death or more than one death at same time)
- unwelcome outcome (1 example: cancellation of 5th birthday party).

One pupil's comment included two themes.

It is interesting that of the 46 girls in Year 7 who completed the questionnaire, 39 completed this question on the significance or importance of the death and/or other related questions on the same page and 19 girls (48%) gave reasons. Of the 26 boys who completed the questionnaire, 17 completed this question and/or others on the same page and 3 (17.6%) gave reasons. Two boys gave reasons of contexts and the third gave a relationship: "They were a part of my family." No boy mentioned having feelings for or spending time with the deceased as 19 girls did.

The reasons given by 12 adults (8 females and 3 males) regarding the significance or importance of a death experienced before they were 19 are as follows:

- first death (Wendy, Keith and Orlando)
- close to deceased (Malcolm Pansy and Imogen)
- emotional outcome (Sandra, Tabitha, Ursula)
- old enough/too young to understand (Barbara and Gail)

By contrast, Jasmine (aged 26) states that pet deaths were the most significant because "you saw them dead and buried them" but "with people you never saw them dead so I always felt... they'd just gone away."

### **Funeral attendance**

Sheila does not know or remember whether she attended her mother's funeral but the tone of her voice tells me that she feels excluded from some important information.

I know she's cremated and there's a plaque for her in Northtown with my grandparents - her parents - which I haven't *seen*. I don't *know* where her ashes were spread.

Thelma went to her brother's funeral but says: "I can't remember that much about it, to be honest. I was in a daze really." Rita is not sure whether she remembers anything of her brother's funeral ceremony but clearly remembers walking behind her father's coffin towards the grave and crying while holding her mother's hand during the ceremony. Only Verity, her brother and her parents attended Dawn's funeral and Verity remembers each of them writing a note and putting it in the grave, and her mother crying.

Of 44 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 who described a human death as important, the following details of funeral attendance were given.

**Table 7.10** Year 7: funerals attended so far

Attend	18 = 40%
Did not attend	24 = 54.5%
Don't know or remember	2 = 4.5%

Data from 36 pupils in Year 7 who indicated their age at the time of the death suggests that there is a slightly greater tendency towards non-attendance than attendance at funerals. While at secondary school, 3 pupils had attended a funeral while 7 had not.

**Table 7.11 Year 7: age when bereaved and funeral attendance**

Age of pupil	Number of deaths	Attended funeral	Did not attend funeral
3	1		1
4	1		1
5	6	4	2
6	3	2	1
7	3	1	2
8	2	1	1
9	6	3	3
10	6	4	2
11	6	3	3
12	4		4

Forty-three pupils also considered whether they had wanted to attend and 72% said they had, 18.1% said they had not, and 9% did not know or remember.

The explanation given by Rosemary (aged 16) regarding non-attendance might be similar to that of other pupils at various stages in their school lives, particularly at secondary school.

VC: Did you go to your great uncle's funeral?

Rosemary: No, because it was only last week and I've been doing my [GCSE] exams, so I didn't. My mum said it probably wasn't a good idea because they had to go up for two days... But I didn't go because I just couldn't - didn't really have the time. I felt a bit horrible for not going but - mum didn't think it was a very good idea... I still feel, though, that I should have been there. I knew him, and I should really go to his funeral just out of respect.

Melanie (aged 12) knows two friends whose mothers had died and I asked her what she thought school personnel could do to help. I think her replies indicate the general attitude that pupils imbibe concerning absence from school.

Melanie: I don't know! They could ask them if they want time off school - to get over it. But - I don't know.

VC: That's a good piece of thinking - time off to recover. How long would you think they would need?

Melanie: I don't know. It depends because... They couldn't give them a load of time off because of their education and everything, but as long as they've got over it a little bit - but they'll never completely get over it anyway. But when they feel alright to come back to school, I suppose.

VC: Which really leaves it up to them to decide, doesn't it?

Melanie: Yeah.

...

VC: How long is long enough... Would you think, say, a month?

Melanie: Probably.  
 VC: Would two months be too long?  
 Melanie: Yes, because they'd miss out on quite a lot of school and everything.  
 So they wouldn't know what they were doing when they got back or anything.

Rita remembers having a couple of days off school after her father's funeral, Verity does not mention what she did after her sister's funeral and Sheila was not at school when her mother died. Thelma, however, who was at secondary school when her brother died, feels that the response of her form tutor to her request to go to the funeral was thoughtless:

It all happened on a Saturday night and I went in on the Monday ... my tutor ... when I asked to - went into school and told her she said ... "Oh, you'll be wanting the day off for the funeral then." Well, that just drove me totally up the wall. When I went back we had massive arguments and I got thrown out of my tutor group.

She says that school staff could have made it easier for her by trying "to be a bit more sympathetic" and saying: "Well, come back when you feel a bit better."

### The context of the death and other events remembered at the time

**Table 7.12** Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity: how told of death

Name	Age when bereaved	How told
Rita	(a) 6 (b) 8	(a) by police at home (b) by teacher out of classroom
Sheila	3-4	by father just before she started secondary school at 10/11 years
Thelma	13	by friend who was with brother
Verity	10	by parents

Sheila, who was bereaved before she went to primary school, says she was told about her mother's suicide just before she started at secondary school because her father and stepmother "were afraid" that people there would know what had happened. Apart from this, Sheila does not mention either primary or secondary school as a context for her loss which is not surprising as staff and pupils have

always known that her natural mother is dead and that she has a stepmother. Like the youth worker who introduced us, school staff probably do not know that Sheila's mother committed suicide, although many of her friends do because she discusses it with them.

Rita says she was at primary school when her father died and remembers "the teacher coming in and just taking me out of the classroom and telling me." She also adds, "... as soon as I was taken out of the classroom I knew what had happened - just like the first time [her brother's death] when I knew what had happened." She thinks she was quieter at school after the deaths of her brother and father and that the busy-ness of the school environment helped to keep her from thinking about them. She was also "comforted ... a little bit because of my friends there."

When police came to both her schools to give a routine talk about the dangers of playing on railways lines, Rita's primary school teacher took her out of the class and explained why, but she sat through the talk in the hall at secondary school, crying and unwilling at first to leave for fear of drawing attention to herself. Rita says she was hurt by being singled out for special attention at primary school and hurt for different reasons at secondary school because the incident got her "thinking about it again." She says she was quite shy when she went to secondary school and thinks that "school has changed me quite a bit, actually." Overall, Rita does not think her bereavements affected her schooling and her experience of both primary and secondary schools is positive.

Verity and Rita were at the same primary school and Verity remembers being given special treatment in a music lesson soon after her sister's death. Recognizing that it showed her teacher's care for her she is now glad about it - although, like Rita, she remembers not wanting to feel different at the time. Verity describes their primary school as "very compassionate" towards Rita after her brother and father died and she recalls:

...they said, 'If you want to talk, talk.' And if it had been secondary school I don't know if they would have done the same.

Verity also thinks that secondary school staff "were pretty good" when Rita finally left the talk in the hall in tears because they asked her to go after her friend rather than "chasing after her" themselves.

The accounts by Rita and Verity suggest that some primary school staff feel confident to tell children of their loss and show care towards them. However, both accounts *seem* to contrast with the response Thelma felt she received from her secondary school form tutor, previously cited, whom she describes as saying: "Oh, you'll be wanting the day off, for the funeral then."

In fact, secondary school is the most significant context for Thelma's bereavement. One local newspaper account of Aaron's death - written by the editor who happened to be the driver of the car - noted that Aaron had been drinking under age and suggested that he had been drunk and/or 'playing chicken' on the bypass. Thelma believes that at least one member of staff "said that he was playing chicken to other pupils" and, because of this, she "turned against the rest of them." She "felt a lot of anger" and thought: "Why are you standing there trying to tell me this, that and the other?" because "You don't know everything." In lessons she used to sit in a dream or felt bored and began to truant about six months after Aaron's death because:

I didn't see the point. I thought: 'We're all going to die anyway. I mean, what's the point of wasting my time in school when I could die tomorrow?'

When they realised the extent of her truancy the school personnel asked her if she would like to talk to a counsellor. She agreed to it and explains:

But I don't think the school really understood what the problem stemmed from. They just, I think, thought I was sick of school and couldn't be bothered to go.

The counselling sessions were not successful because the male counsellor in his mid-twenties "just sat there and expected me to tell him my whole story." She complains that he did not attempt to ask her anything or to give her any answers. At 13, she says pupils look up to adults and "don't see them as equals" and, since the sessions took place on school premises, she did not feel she could be honest with him, even if she had wanted to be.

Perhaps because Rita's bereavements occurred while she was at a primary school small enough to enable its teachers to show they cared, her attitude to school life is positive. After taking GCSEs at secondary school she stayed on and went into the sixth form because "I knew all the teachers and that comforted me in a big way so I wouldn't have to go somewhere strange and start all over again." Thelma, by contrast, whose exams at the same secondary school were "a total disaster," now travels to college and is glad "I've got away from this town."

In order to explore the school context further, I analysed by theme the following 20 answers given by 30 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 to describe what else was happening at the time of a death.

**Table 7.13** Year 7: other events at time of death

birthday of self or relative	7
school events (starting a new school, "at school", school tests, holidays)	5
changes in family (birth of sibling, moving house, parents separating, other family deaths)	4
Christmas/ Easter	2
pet's illness or death	2

When these contexts are grouped according to either home life (birthdays, family and pet = 13) or school life (school events and holidays = 7), it becomes clear that these two areas are the most important in the lives of pupils. How adults

remember the juxtaposition of school events and bereavement will be explored next.

**School events and bereavement**

The replies of 32 adults to the question "What else was happening in your life at the time of the death?" are given below. Only adults whose replies focused on the death of a human while they were at school or college are included.

**Table 7.14** Adults: other events at time of death

at school	6
at school but no worries about work	2
exams and work at school	8
transition between schools	5
transition between school & college	2
taking exams at college	4
home and family	3
death of pet	1
religious conversion	1

It is interesting that 84% of the replies are connected with education in some way - whether at school or college/university. Twenty-one percent of replies describe transitions in school life (between primary and secondary levels and further and higher education); 25% describe 'being at school' and 34% describe academic work and exams. Some of the associations between school life and bereavement become even more apparent when the descriptions are further examined.

Patrick (aged 68) writes that he had just started primary school and was starting to make friends when his father died and he became withdrawn for a while. Malcolm (aged 29) remembers that the deaths happened soon after he started at secondary school. Wendy (aged 22) seems to compare her dead 21 year old friend with herself, saying she was "still at school, had lots of friends, social life etc - normal things for a 15 year old to look forward to and do." Orlando (aged

21) captures something of the lull in school atmosphere before option choices at 13 with his description: "at school but with no school worries. "

Exams and school work were mentioned by 8 people of whom 4 were about to take O levels/GCSEs when the death occurred. In addition, Barry (aged 27) remembers he was under pressure from school work (when 13) and Lorraine (aged 42) writes that about two years after the death (when 12) her "schoolwork began to deteriorate." Camilla's (aged 24) grandfather died on the day before she sat one of her English A level papers and she felt "a bit cross because it got in the way of my exams." Shortly after the exam started she tried to leave but was prevented by a teacher whom she knew well who encouraged her to stay. Camilla was awarded grade E after a letter of explanation was sent to the examination board and she says:

I think I would have failed without that letter. My English tutor tells me I was on line for a B or C but I'm still not terribly sure if I would have passed anyway, so in some respects I sort of have a bit of a giggle and think: 'Oh thanks, granddad, you got me a pass there. I really needed that one.'

After his mother died Gavin (aged 52) diverted his energies into school work and did well at O and A level but "thereafter lost a sense of direction" and "did badly in the first couple of years at university." Nancy (aged 64) remembers that after her grandfather died university was a "great relief and occupier of time and energy" and Karen (aged 40), who was in her first year at teacher training college when her mother died, thereafter "worked very hard - shutting myself up in the library all the time."

I suggest that school life can be either a haven or a burden after a death occurs. By keeping pupils busy it may distract them from their grief and allow them to be like their friends, or it may demand more of them in terms of concentration, work and attendance than they can give. The deaths of parents and siblings (which are rare) and grandparents and pets (which are more frequent) may intrude into the lives of children and young people at any point in their school life and affect their

academic progress but at secondary level, such intrusions seem to be more difficult to manage.

### **Overview of interaction between bereavement and school events**

In this section I have tried to explore the frequency and type of bereavement experienced during the school years and the impact of school life and events (such as exams) on funeral attendance and compassionate leave. I think at least three aspects can be identified.

First, it seems that many pupils rate both bereavement and school life as important periods of their life and, because of this, some struggle when the two coincide. Thelma's story shows that, under certain circumstances, unsympathetic school personnel may thoughtlessly affect the grieving process. Rita, Sheila and Thelma consider the first chapter of their life ended with a death and anticipate the next chapter ending when they leave further education. Interestingly, Rita sees her father's death as the only significant event so far. Many 11-12 year olds and adults cite a particular death as important or a turning-point, and a large number of pupils in Maxwell Year 7 had experienced a bereavement during the previous year. Most retrospective accounts by adults give 'being at school,' school transitions and academic work and exams as the context for a death event.

Second, it may be difficult to come to terms with the shock of death from accidents and suicide - such as Rita, Sheila and Thelma experienced - while involved in the activities and exam systems of school. Although most pupils experience the death of a grandparent or pet from illness or age some, such as Verity, encounter natural death in other forms (malformation) which may be even more unsettling.

Third, exams and pressure of school work seem to prevent some pupils from attending funerals or taking compassionate leave and, because of this, it may be easier for primary rather than secondary pupils to attend funerals. Rosemary explains how many pupils may feel about missing a funeral because of exams.

### **THEME 3: MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Influence of and commitment to traditional religious beliefs and practices**

In our first interview Sheila explained that although she occasionally goes to church, this activity is unrelated to belief:

I'm not Christian, I'm not religious either. Some people think that's bad but again, it's my life, it's my views. I don't - I couldn't go to - *not* go to church. I wouldn't like, go up to a church and sort of think: "Oh I can't go in." I quite often do go to church, Christmas, Christian events. This sounds stupid but Christian events I quite often do go to church. But I'm not religious. Um, as far as I don't believe that Jesus has got a message for us all, any of that. I don't believe in that at all.

Sheila's explanation is in contrast to Rita's who says that after her father died she and her mother began to attend the local parish church where they knew a lot of people "to try and find an answer."

I'd lost two people and people there were saying 'Oh God loves you', you know, 'He'll always be there for you.' Maybe that's how I found the comfort.

However, Rita and her mother stopped attending the parish church when she was about 12 because her mother remarried and they moved to another town. She says they did not consider attending church in the new town but would have returned to the previous one because "a lot of my friends went there - Verity went there. And I knew almost everyone there." It seems from this comment that the most important feature of church attendance was having a social support network rather than theological beliefs.

As already indicated, Verity and her parents, who were regular churchgoers, attended the same parish church as Rita. Verity has a sense of God's involvement in her sister's death.

VC: Any thoughts about God at that stage of your life, when she died?

Verity: Yeah, when I was that age it was almost like the breaking point when I did slip away [from church]. I decided it wasn't for me, but I did go off it a bit I must admit but I felt extremely guilty. I felt - because a lot of my friends were Christians and I had been in a Christian family - I just felt that I'd been ignoring and neglecting Him... and it was obvious Dawn was ill and she must have died for a reason, you know.

Verity explains why she left the church for about a year.

... I didn't blame God but I wanted to be angry with someone. I think that's what it was and I didn't want to be angry with my family...

She says, "I think I felt I just didn't want to talk to Him," but also felt guilty and lost at staying away. However, she returned to church activities at about 11 and stayed for two more years until

... people started getting really heavy on you, stupid stuff, they still do it now.  
... They're just really intense people and I think I began to realise it at a really young age and that's when I started to get out of it and found talking to Rita helped.

It may not be connected but the first time she "started to get out of it" was soon after her sister's death.

Thelma, however, has formulated a different response to teaching about God following her bereavement. Although she went with friends to Sunday school at the same parish church until she was about 7, she has not been since and her religious beliefs have probably been shaped far more by RE in school:

... you go to your RE lessons and you hear what everyone else thinks. And I just sort of went with 'There is a God and there is a heaven.'

This passive belief in God was a background to the deaths of her grandfather when she was 4 and her grandmother when she was 12, but it was challenged by

the deaths of her father's uncle and another grandmother just a week before Aaron was killed (see next section).

The kind of religious membership and attendance described by these four teenagers seems typical of many other pupils. Thirty-three percent of 72 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 indicated that they had been brought up within a particular religious tradition.

**Table 7.15** Year 7: religious upbringing

"Christian"	Church of England	Methodist	Jehovah's Witness	no explanation
5	15	1	2	1

However, just 19% of 57 pupils in Year 7 indicated that they currently belong to or attend a particular religious group. There were two unclear answers and one pupil indicated more than one activity.

**Table 7.16** Year 7: current religious affiliation

"Christian"	2
Sunday School	2
church	2
church choir	3
youth club	1
Jehovah's Witness	2
Buddhist	1
don't know/ no answer	2

Attendance at a place of worship or membership of a religious group does not, of course, indicate acceptance of traditional belief as the comment by Sheila shows. Sandra (aged 44) writes that after the death of her father (when 14) and paternal grandfather (when 15) she had an intensely religious phase, was confirmed, and had a sense of religious vocation until her mid-twenties but that what she was seeking - and found - was an 'alternative family'.

## **Belief in God or a divine power**

Sheila does not mention any kind of belief in God and states, "I'm my own person and I have my own beliefs, kind of attitude towards it [death]."

Rita says that her understanding of God and of God's will regarding death developed through attendance at church:

I didn't know much about God to start off with when I was young - maybe that's why my mum got involved in it ... but - it was really blurry to start off with - and then, as I say, at times, I thought I had, you know, I thought, well maybe it's just God saying - you know, that they should be with Him. And then, other times, I just think, well, why did He do this thing really? I don't know.

Although her theological thinking refers specifically to church teaching - because she and her mother only went to church after the deaths of her brother and father - it is likely that any reference in school to the same themes and activities of church also encouraged her reflection. For example, she recounts how different primary school prayers were to church prayers: pupils never closed their eyes and would "muck about" while people in church raised their hands and often spoke in tongues.

Rita's belief in the existence of God seems unchanged now from the time when she attended church. She describes God as "a whirling mass" which is "around" in the world and when asked whether God will play a part in her career plans, says: "If He wants to influence me then he *will* find a way, won't He?" Whether due to church attendance, parental, school or social support, her beliefs are mainly in line with traditional Christian teaching of a loving personal God. This is evident in the following extract in which I probe the apparent contradiction that a loving God would deliberately cause someone's death.

VC: Because you said, "Really I do believe in God."

Rita: Yeah. It's just such a - I think, really, He is loving, but He's judgmental as well. I think He's both.

VC: If this is the judgmental bit and this is the loving bit (showing hands balanced equally) which one is heavier or bigger: judging, loving?

Rita: I'd say loving actually.

VC: Loving is bigger, more important?

Rita: Yeah.

VC: Any other part...?

Rita: It's really difficult to say because - because if God is judgmental he's judging whether to take away a person's life or not - yeah?

VC: You said it.

Rita: Yeah. Um, but He's - it's contradicting itself in a way because if He's loving then He wouldn't *do* it.

Verity also struggles with the idea of God's power over life and death.

VC: So where does God fit into the idea that people die when they're young, or, as you said, when they're good people?

Verity: When I was younger, you don't know why He lets them die. You don't think it's right that they should die, [so] it must have something to do with Him, I don't know how. I know he controls the whole plan but I don't know how he controls which people die...

Verity says her picture of God has not changed through the years, although her way of worshipping God has. She says, "it's nice to know someone's watching over you" because she feels she has "done some very bad things" and "He'll always say it's OK." She describes God as "always there if you need to speak to Him," someone who seems bigger, older and wiser than Jesus, although "Jesus is the sort of more important because He has been here..." Verity says that sometimes she has prayed and it has felt as if "He's done something for me because things are happening." She does not say she prayed at the time of Dawn's death but considers, overall, that it "was quite a good thing" for financial reasons that Dawn did not live.

Thelma's view of God, however, as previously explained, is influenced by two other deaths just before her brother died.

I don't believe in God. ... When he [Aaron] died my faith totally went - not that I had much before - but that, just sort of, like everyone dying and then he went. And I thought: "Well, if there was something, why take all the family?"

She rejects the Christian notion of a loving, caring God as described by Rita.

There's so many disasters and horrible things that happen to people and I think that if there is a caring God up there, why did He let such things happen?

Thelma's dismissal of conventional Christianity prevents her from joining a church community (as Rita and her mother did) and she is forced to search for meanings and solutions herself. However, it is likely that she would not have rejected these beliefs if Aaron and her other relatives had not died, as she suggests in the following extract (italics mine):

VC: OK, so you're saying 'I believed what everyone else wanted to believe'...  
 Thelma: Yeah, I wasn't really sure, I hadn't made up my mind - *life sort of made up my mind for me.*

How far the experiences and beliefs of these four teenagers are typical of other pupils will be explored below comparing 80 pupils in Hester Year 5 and Maxwell Years 7 and 10.

**Table 7.17** Years 5, 7 and 10: belief in God

I believe that	Year 5 (n=15)	Year 7 (n=46)	Year 10 (n=19)	Total = 80
God exists and takes care of us	5 = 33.3%	15 = 31.2%	3 = 15.7%	23 = 28.7%
God exists but does not affect our everyday life	2 = 13.3%	8 = 16.6%	3 = 15.7%	13 = 16.2%
God may exist but I'm not sure	6 = 40%	17 = 35.4%	11 = 57.8%	34 = 42.5%
God doesn't exist	2 = 13.3%	6 = 12.5%	2 = 10.5%	10 = 12.5%

Seventy pupils say that they believe in the existence of God (of whom 34 are ambivalent about their belief) and 10 say they do not believe.

In Maxwell Year 7 no overall correlation can be found between belief in God and bereavement experiences of close family members: the pupil whose father died did not answer; two pupils whose sisters died said: "God doesn't exist"; and

another pupil whose sister died said "God exists and takes care of us." In Year 10 Aileen (aged 15) thinks God "may exist but I'm not sure."

Among pupils at primary school a range of ideas about God are evident, some of which may be influenced by traditional teaching whether in a place of worship or school, and the following three respondents (children of friends or colleagues) indicate this breadth.

Jennifer (aged 10), whose parents are Quakers, attends Church of England services and Quaker meetings. She went to the funeral of her great grandmother in 1995. She describes the "spirit" of her grandmother - and of all people (see later) - as the invisible "main part" of her and spontaneously compares this with God.

VC: So how come we believe in a thing we can't see and actually aren't sure exists?

Jennifer: It's the same with God. None of us has seen God. Some of us may have been spoken - er, spoken - er have Him spoken to -

VC: Spoken to by God, do you mean?

Jennifer: Yes. So they believe. But some of us just believe because they think - well they just believe, I don't know the reasons why. I don't know whether I believe in Him or not, I haven't really thought it through. I don't know if I do believe and why I believe. ...

VC: ... you said He, or it could be She, I suppose..

Jennifer: Yes. It could be anything. ... People draw it in books as a kind of human - but I don't think it is - but it may be!

Timothy (aged 13) "just about" remembers his grandfather who died when he was 5. He says, "I'm not upset about it because I don't remember him well enough." Like Sheila, he rarely attends a religious place of worship and describes religion as "a bit old fashioned" because he sees science to "have the leading edge" in explanations of how the world began. I asked Timothy about his ideas of God.

Timothy: I would have thought... just something like air. Or with no *mass*. And just a sort of a presence.

VC: Does it have any human kind of characteristics?...

Timothy: In a way, I suppose if there's anything, it could be put down as something like a cloud with a face. And with a couple of arms, maybe.

Rosemary (aged 16) has experienced the deaths of her great aunt, great uncle and pets. A Catholic, she goes to weekly mass and accepts an orthodox view, but struggles with what it means.

Rosemary: Well, I do believe all the things because I've been to church since I was younger so I've got taught certain things and I do believe that God is like three parts, and things. But - I don't quite know how I think it works. I don't know whether to think of it as three different people or one person, or what... I usually, I suppose, just think about one person.

VC: Which of the three, mostly, then?

Rosemary: The Father.

Belief in some sort of God or a divine power seems to be common for many respondents (only 12.5% of Years 5, 7 and 10 denied God's existence). Ideas of God may include pseudo-scientific description of a "cloud with a face" and the Christian tradition of the Trinity. It is notable that Jennifer struggles to articulate the difference between belief in something unseen and unknown and having a sense of God's presence which confirms certainty. As I have already indicated, having an experience of this kind - whether of the presence of God or 'something' or 'someone' - is not considered unusual for bereaved people and it is interesting to conjecture that bereavement experiences may sometimes be described as religious or spiritual ones.

Having a sense of the presence of the deceased will be considered next, bearing in mind this possibility.

### **Having a sense of a presence: God/ divine spirit or the deceased**

Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity each mention maintaining contact with the deceased in some way. Sheila has been told she and her mother look like sisters and she wonders how much like her mother she is in terms of personality and disposition. She says this knowledge is "quite scary in some ways. Living her. I don't know how Dad copes."

When asked if she ever has a sense of her mother with her, Sheila replies:

One thing I always like to think is that she's watching over me. Not necessarily all the time. It's not necessary that she's always there but somehow it comforts me to think that she *is* there because I've always been told - one thing I have always been told by my Dad - is that she doted on me. ... There's times I can swear I've turned around and she's been there, maybe not that I could see her but she was ... she was sort of *there*. Um, I don't know how to explain it.

Rita says that when she was younger she used to go to the graves of her brother and father to talk to them and that, every now and again, she writes letters to her father "when there's something really bothering me." In line with her fairly traditional Christian beliefs, she says:

I think I'm going to, that when I die I know that I will go to be with them. I will go up wherever heaven is - if there is one. I will go up - with them and meet my grandmother who's also died now. And then we'll be together again.

I asked Rita what she would ask her brother, Walter, if she could communicate with him somehow, and she says: "I would just like to know how - how it actually happened. Because I'm not quite sure about that." She says she would also ask him where he is, what happened after he died, whether he suffered any pain and whether her father and grandmother are "up there" with him.

Even though Verity's sister only lived for a short time she says:

... I know it sounds strange but I always think I'm going to see her again. I mean I believe there's a heaven, that's just the way I've been brought up. Sometimes I try and picture her and I think she's watching me... I sort of imagine her with long gingery-blond hair really light, sitting in a big white place... I just imagine her growing up as the years go by.

When I asked Verity if she imagined Dawn growing up to be like her she emphatically replied, "No, she's different. She's perfect!" Verity thinks it "would have been nice" to watch Dawn grow up, making sure she did not "do the things I did."

At first Thelma went to her brother's grave "every single night for over a year" in an attempt "to hold on to anything that I could." She says she used to sit and

think about both happy and sad times and "sort of pictured him still there." Sometimes she talked to him in her head. After a year those visits became weekly and now she rarely goes because she says "it's not actually *him* that's down there." She feels he is somewhere else - although she doesn't know exactly where - and admits: "Sometimes if you're a bit down you do feel as if - you can feel his presence as it were." Asked when this sense of Aaron's presence occurred for her, she says:

I don't recall it happening outside of the house. Quite often in my room which I'm in at the moment because I moved into his room. ... I think I feel a lot closer to him now I'm in that room.

She says that if she could speak to him now she would ask "what it's like where he is," how he got there and what the journey had been like. Later in our conversation I was humbled by the following comment she made regarding her contact with Aaron.

When I was - when Fiona asked me about coming down here for this interview, I was, you know, in my mind I was like asking him: "Should I do this? Is this right?" And I just had a strong feeling that it was the right thing to do. Whether that was me or what, I don't know.

In order to see how prevalent a sense of presence is in children and young people - whether of God, something inexplicable or a deceased loved one - answers given below are by Hester Year 5 and Maxwell Years 7 and 10 to the question: "Have you at times felt that God or a divine power is close to you?"

**Table 7.18** Years 5, 7 and 10: frequency of experience of closeness of God/ divine spirit

Statement	Year 5 (n=15)	Year 7 (n=48)	Year 10 (n=19)	Total = 82
very often	2 = 13.3%	6 = 12.5%	0	8 = 9.7%
a few times	2 = 13.3%	11 = 22.9%	3 = 15.7%	16 = 19.5%
perhaps but I'm not sure	4 = 26.6%	17 = 35.4%	11 = 57.8%	32 = 39.0%
no	7 = 46.6%	14 = 29.1%	5 = 26.3%	26 = 31.7%

Fifty-six pupils think they have experienced the presence of God (although 32 are uncertain) and 26 consider they have not had this experience. The data indicate increased scepticism with age since fewer pupils in Year 5 than Years 7 and 10 display uncertainty. In Year 7 there is no firm correlation between belief and death of a close family member: the pupil whose father died did not answer; one pupil whose sister died ticked "very often"; and two pupils whose siblings died ticked "no". Aileen in Year 10 (aged 15) ticked "perhaps but I'm not sure."

The 5 most frequently cited occasions (out of 20 suggested) when it is possible that God or a divine power could be near are given below. Respondents could choose as many examples as they wished.

**Table 7.19** Years 5, 7 and 10: circumstances of experience of closeness of God/divine spirit

Statement	Year 5 (n=14)	Year 7 (n=51)	Year 10 (n=19)	Total = 84
after someone has died	8 = 57.1%	41 = 80.3%	11 = 57.8%	60
when someone is dying	3 = 21.4%	40 = 78.4%	11 = 57.8%	54
when I am sad or upset	8 = 57.1%	39 = 76.4%	9 = 47.3%	56
when I am ill	8 = 57.1%	40 = 78.4%	7 = 36.8%	55
when I am frightened	4 = 28.5%	40 = 78.4%	11 = 57.8%	55

"After someone I know has died" received the highest or joint-highest score from all three groups and "when someone is dying" received the joint-highest score from Years 7 and 10. This probably indicates that, at times of death, people often seek comfort and help from a greater source than themselves and that older pupils have experienced this situation more frequently than younger ones. I suggest that there may be a similarity between having a sense of God/divine

power at times of distress such as bereavement and sensing the presence of the deceased at various stages in the grieving process.

### **Explanations and support given by adults regarding death**

Rita's brother and father and Thelma's brother died in road accidents. Rita says that people did not try "to make a reason" for their deaths "they just said, you know, it was one of those things - it was an accident." Thelma, however, implies that the car driver involved was responsible for her brother's death:

Thelma: It was called an accident.

VC: What would *you* call it?

Thelma: I would say it's his fault. Although he was going within the speed limit, if you see somebody crossing, you don't just carry on.

Verity has medical explanations for her sister's death.

I guess she was born too early. She was four months premature and mum was in hospital anyway with complications. It just seems that she wasn't developed enough to live so that's how she died.

Sheila, however, is searching for different kinds of explanations. As a child she was told that her mother had died in her sleep and, when she looks back, the circumstances surrounding the death are "a whole blank." She realises that "no-one talked about it because they were out of their depth" but, now, she feels "someone must know something" about the reasons for her mother's suicide.

In the light of these observations, it is interesting to see what kind of explanations Maxwell Years 7 and 10 were given for a death, as shown below.

**Table 7.20** Years 7 and 10: explanations received regarding death

Explanation	Year 7 (n=25)	Year 10 (n=10)
specific medical (cancer, heart attack, chromosome problems)	12 = 48%	7 = 70%
age or natural causes (old, died in sleep)	8 = 32%	2 = 20%
general medical (ill, didn't grow properly)	7 = 28%	1 = 10%
accident (road and home)	3 = 12%	0
religious or moral (they wouldn't have any more pain; she'd be in heaven now)	2 = 8%	0

Specific medical explanations given by adults seem to increase with the age of the bereaved child while religious/moral explanations decrease. Most deaths caused by accidents are unlikely to be medically analysed since the circumstances of the event are deemed to have caused it. For example, Rita makes logical connections which really do not exist ("of course" and "so") between one event and another regarding her father's death.

They were walking the dog one afternoon and the dog got loose and of course it went on the train track, so my father tried to go after it and of course he didn't make it, and a train came along, so - he got caught under it.

She cannot, of course, blame the dog for its carelessness or the driver for driving the train and she would not blame her father for his actions - although it could be argued that he took a great risk and his death was not inevitable. I am not surprised that Rita avoids attributing moral blame since a train cannot be halted as easily as a car can swerve, which is what Thelma implies.

Although there is quite a subtle difference between explanations and words of comfort, respondents seem to have distinguished between the two. Only 66% of 54 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 indicated that anyone tried to comfort or help them and explanations given by 28 of them are grouped by theme as follows:

- moral (10 examples, eg: it was for the best; had had a good life; not in pain now; would be happy)
- religious/spiritual regarding the state or destination of the deceased (6 examples, eg: gone to heaven; in nice place now; is a spirit now)
- practical or concrete help (5 examples, eg: helped me through school; have got other people)
- general support (4 examples, eg: talked about it together)
- universal or cosmic perspective (4 examples: life goes on; it happens to everyone; no-one lasts forever; cannot come back to us)
- general advice (3 examples, eg: never mind).

Eight out of 17 pupils in Maxwell Year 10 said they were given help but only 3 gave explanations of what they remember being told when they were 7, 13 and 14 respectively:

- moral reasons (Aileen: he would want me to be happy, not sad)
- religious/spiritual (old and it was time for her to go to heaven for peace; at rest now)

It is interesting that 52% of these older pupils did not indicate that they were given any help or support and that adults recently used religious-spiritual terms rather than any other kind with two of them. Perhaps there is some truth in Thelma's comment about the reasons people give for death.

VC: ... I'm wondering if we have to have a cause or a reason for death? What do you think about that?

Thelma: ... Do you mean in the sense of accepting it and saying "Oh that's why they died"? Yeah, I think we do.

VC: It helps, does it?

Thelma: Yeah. To know why.

VC: And maybe to have a medical reason helps a great deal. And if we can't find a medical reason...

Thelma: Then we search for a spiritual. Which is what I tried to do with Aaron, through the books about mediums and people like that.

## **Acceptance of traditional religious beliefs and formulation of new religious-spiritual ones**

Of the four teenagers, Verity is the only one to espouse a conventional Christian view of the links between God and death.

It's like His Son died on the cross and He was a good man but we know why He died, He died for us to save us. But I don't know why He lets all these good people die. I just feel angry, I just can't picture it in my head. I can't see why He lets it happen if you see what I mean.

However, when people seek beyond traditional Christianity for further ideas about what happens after death they frequently encounter literature on near-death experiences and spiritualism in libraries and bookshops. Both Rita and Thelma mention the work of Doris Stokes and accounts of near-death experiences and Thelma read what her mother borrowed from friends and their local library.

Thelma: ... after about 6 months I started reading a lot about death and life after death and all that sort of thing. About mediums and it helped quite a lot really. But, you know, I didn't realise at the time ... this is a load of rubbish! ...  
VC: Were you looking, do you suppose, to see where he [Aaron] had gone?  
Thelma: Yes, I think so. I didn't, you know, like the idea of dying and that's it - you're gone and there's nothing more.

Not long after Aaron died Thelma's mother went to a medium - probably because "it was the only form of contact that she had with him" - and although Thelma had thought about going she did not accompany her. Thelma has since rejected Stokes' work but considers that what the medium said on the tape her mother brought back "was quite accurate." (I did not suggest that the medium might have read about Aaron's death in the newspapers and Thelma did not seem to think of it.)

Rita and her mother also thought of going to a medium (probably the same one) but did not do so. Like Thelma, Rita has read about spiritualism and near-death experiences and she is inclined to make sense of it. However Rita is more interested in the body-spirit divide as the following extract shows:

VC: How does your experience of losing somebody through death relate to anything at all that Christianity tells you?

Rita: ... One thing I think about more than anything else is all the light at the end of the tunnel. Because I'm really interested in that bit. That's the bit I would really like to find out about - about as the spirit comes out of the body. I suppose that is my faith in a way because that's what Christians believe. They believe that the spirit does come out of the body and then go towards the light so I suppose there are links there - but it's very hard to make much sense of it.

...  
VC: ... The attraction - if there is any attraction in the link - is that Christianity *seems* to be talking about a future spirit life?

Rita: Yeah, and it's also - because if you believe in something it sort of gives you comfort in a way, doesn't it?

It is interesting that Rita's belief in God is fairly conventional but that her belief about what happens after death is not really orthodox - although she thinks it is. In a similar way Thelma, who as we have seen rejects any idea of a loving God, says:

I believe that there is something there. From the range of books that I read I decided that you did go on somewhere - a better place. And I thought: "Well, if we can be alive and live, why can't we go on to do something else?"

...  
As I said before, I don't - well, I suppose you could call it heaven or - call it heaven, I don't know. I suppose I was trying to go against what other people believe. I believe they [the deceased] go somewhere. Something happens to you after you die. You go onto another life or what have you.

However, Thelma rejects the notion of travelling along a tunnel after death, saying, "I wouldn't like to go down it!" because "all the things that I've read, put together, it didn't seem a very pleasant experience."

Wendy (aged 22) and Yoland (aged 23) also became interested in spiritualism after sensing the presence of deceased people. When she was about 3, Wendy woke up and saw at the end of her bed "quite a big person" smiling at her, whom her aunt later identified as her paternal grandfather who had died before she was born. This made sense to Wendy because she had never known him and she says that occasionally she 'sees' somebody on the stairs or in the hall and "I know what the feeling means." Yoland has a sense of the presence of her maternal grandmother (who died when she was 21) through smelling certain smells and

hearing her grandmother's voice reprimanding her with familiar phrases. She says:

I'm still a Christian. I wouldn't ever come away from that but I think explanations of an after life, my idea of it, has changed.

In the following explanation she moves beyond Rita's pseudo-Christian one and uses logic that accords with her cognitive level of reasoning:

I remember in science, energy went from kinetic or you had sound energy and everything moved. It was never dying, the energy, and it kept on going. And I remember thinking: Well, you can't just die. It must just carry on going. But how does it carry on going? And the spiritualism made sense...

Sheila has been bereaved for the longest period of time and, during the last five years, has had to come to terms with why her mother took her own life. She dismisses belief in an afterlife reunion, saying:

I wouldn't kill myself or damage myself in any way thinking that I could get close to *her* if I did so. Because that to me sounds daft, basically.

Sheila twice describes death as "a very secret world" and says that it scares her. She says that "when I do die I want to do it quickly." Her overall view of what happens to people after they die is that "different people go different ways." I explored her thinking about this idea as follows:

Sheila: Some... it's like I've been brought up with people who have died and come back again.

VC: Right, those people who have had a near-death experience. They've not actually died but...

Sheila: Not actually gone but very very close to it. They see the tunnel. Well if they like to *believe* that then surely that might be what happens to them. Who can say? This is where I think death's a secret. ...

VC: How about others?

Sheila: Others? Laid to rest. I like that thought. ... If you're dead, you're *dead*. ... Um you don't sort of stay alive until someone else dies. ...

VC: Others? Are there others in your thinking?

Sheila: Maybe there's a heaven. Maybe some people *do* go to heaven. They sort of float up and - their souls... Maybe some people die but don't emotionally die if that makes sense. I've always thought that people who - who are murdered - that's always swayed my belief a bit because they didn't actually want to die. ... So perhaps they do come back because it's not their time to go because it hasn't been naturally done. ... I don't believe in hell. I don't really care what people have done with their lives - well, obviously I care but I don't think that people go to hell immediately because they've murdered someone. Or because they've sinned.

VC: That's far too simplistic an answer to life, isn't it?

Sheila: Yeah. Everyone sins.

Although Sheila declares, "If you're dead, you're *dead*," she has formulated a fairly complicated but individualistic view of an afterlife which allows each person the opportunity to go to where she or he expects to go: some travel down a tunnel, others are laid to rest and stay at rest, others go to heaven, others return in some way if they die before their time because they are not 'emotionally dead' and even murderers may avoid hell because "everyone sins."

Sheila says, "I've thought a lot about death," and I think she has had to come to terms with untimely but planned death because of her mother's suicide. On the one hand she knows and believes that "the dead are dead" and don't come back but, on the other hand, she senses her mother with her - or, at least, thinks she is watching her - but sees her mother's suicide as the selfish act of someone who is "sick in the head," knowing that, traditionally, Christianity has condemned such an action. Her beliefs seem to be the most complex of the four 16-17 year old respondents I interviewed - perhaps because she has a more difficult bereavement to work through and also has had more time in which to work out her ideas. She rejects or simply side-steps belief in a creator or first/efficient cause and focuses instead on humanity, employing a largely moral theory to explain humanity's ultimate destination.

Despite their different beliefs regarding God, Rita, Thelma and Verity espouse similar views of why people die. Rita implies the action of a divine power in her statement that "everyone's got to go when they're called" and also says:

I think there's a time to die. When your time has come, you go, but it's very unfair when people go away when you don't want them to.

Thelma simply says "it was meant to happen" and Verity believes "it's just fate." Their apparent acceptance of greater or unknown forces at work may be due to the type of death (accident and natural) since Sheila does not speak in such terms, and, if she could, would ask her mother why *she* killed herself.

When I discussed the notion of "spirit" with Jennifer (aged 10; see earlier in this chapter) she reiterated some of Sheila's ideas of people having the ability to choose their ultimate destination.

Jennifer: If my Gran dies, she's buried. Her *body* is buried but her spirit, I think - this is what I believe - goes to where she wants it to be. And if she wants it to go to a place in the sky that most people believe is heaven, then it will. If she doesn't, if she wants it to stay with her, then it will. / think that it will do whatever she wills it to do.

VC: Talk to me a bit more about this "spirit" that you've mentioned. Have you any ideas about what part of us this might be?

Jennifer: It's - maybe - the main part of us, the main creation - and our character, our personality. It's just like the seed of our lives. If we didn't have that then I don't think - it's like not having bones!

Primrose (aged 11) seems to have had her thinking influenced by the deaths of her sister and grandmother when she was 10. She was not brought up within a religious tradition, is not currently connected with one, does not believe in the existence of God or think that God has ever felt close to her and says:

My Nan was a strong believer in the afterlife and strange things happened, so I believe she is a spirit.

She does not explain what she means, though, or give any beliefs about her *sister's* current status or destination. Her deceased grandmother's belief in an afterlife seems to have influenced her to state that we "go to [an] afterlife" when we die - perhaps because her grandmother said that this would be her own destination as well as that of Primrose's sister.

The concept of the spirit or essence of a person continuing after death can be seen in a variety of answers to the question: "What do you think happens when we die?" Of 41 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 who responded to this question, 21% said they did not know and the answers of the other 78%, grouped according to 10 themes, are:

- go to heaven, hell or in-between (7 examples)
- go to heaven or an afterlife (6)
- recreated or reborn as another human or animal (5)

- the spirit continues (3)
- sleep or dream for the rest of our lives (3)
- go to own world or heaven to be with family(2)
- rest in peace (2)
- the body rots (2)
- live on in people's hearts (1)
- nothing (1)

Only the last four replies do not imply continuation of the spirit. However, "rest in peace" is ambiguous, "live on in people's hearts" refers to the bereaved rather than the deceased and only "the body rots" and "nothing" come closest to non-belief in such a concept.

Interestingly, responses from some adults in my research show that earlier held traditional ideas (such as belief in the spirit) are discarded over time. Gail (aged 30; mother died when she was 9) was brought up within the Anglican church tradition. She does not know what happens after death but writes: "I feel there is more to life than life and that we shall find out soon enough!" At her father's funeral (when 29) she felt the warmth of the sun and the colours and smells of the world around her "as if surrounded by a powerful, positive 'something.' " Karen (aged 40) writes about how she made sense of her mother's death (when 19) within her new-found faith.

At the time I was a fairly recent convert to evangelical Christianity. I remember that my great concern was that this system of belief offered no comfort about the death of my mother who had rejected religious belief. About 18 months after her death I discovered amongst my mother's things a booklet entitled 'How can I accept Christ?' I came to believe that the reason she died was so that God could take her to himself when she was closest to him. This comforted me for many years - although now I see that as trying to make sense of her death in a way that also made sense of the beliefs I then held.

Twenty-one years later she has abandoned these beliefs and now thinks that death is:

The end of life. I don't know what happens but it doesn't seem too important to me now. I believe that there is no consciousness after death.

Tabitha (aged 51), brought up within Roman Catholicism, says that her mother's death when she was 12 "caused me to re-examine religious and/or spiritual values" and to study comparative religions when doing a degree. She now describes herself as agnostic-atheistic and believes that, when we die, "our bodies feed the earth and we live on in other people's thoughts."

Gavin (aged 52) writes that he became preoccupied with spiritualism for a while after his mother's death (when 15) and has now

moved from a conventional 'given' sense of meaning in life in Christian terms to a positive one of meaning as something I give to my own life in a provisional way.

He used to "believe, unthinkingly, in some sort of life after death" but has revised his thinking in the last ten years to consider "that death is really the end with nothing after." He describes his present attitude to life as: make "what you can of today and don't put it off too much" because it is chancy, unpredictable and transitory.

Ian (aged 63; father died when he was 2), like Karen, says "death is the end of any sort of human life - we live on in the memories of other people." He seems to espouse a terrestrial sense of meaning in life when he writes "I delight in the idea of all my physical bits going back into circulation." The sense that he and Tabitha have of unity with the rest of creation after death - cognitively and emotionally living in people's memories and physically feeding the earth - foreshadow ideas explored in the last section of this chapter: moral feelings, attitudes and behaviour towards other people and the rest of the created world.

## **Moral attitudes and expressions of practical spirituality**

This final section explores notions of morality and spirituality bearing in mind Carter's (1987) visual overview of Kohlberg's theory of interconnecting human and cosmic relationships (see chapters 4 and 5).

As well as considering the responses of bereaved children and young people in relation to other people, and national and world issues, I am interested in exploring the ongoing influence of the deceased (from a cosmic perspective) in the lives of their relatives. For various reasons, I did not discuss the issues in the same depth with all 4 teenagers and only questionnaire replies from Year 7 are relevant. It is worth reflecting that people are more likely to remember actions which others do to or for them than those that they do on behalf of other people, probably because only the recipient can say: "This was important to me."

### **Self, other people and the peer group: socio-conventional laws and moral principles**

This perspective explores how far bereavement affects respect for moral laws - whether socio-conventional rules or moral principles.

When Verity left the church after Dawn died at about 13 (see earlier in theme 3) she "found other things to do that seemed to be a better idea at that age." She admits that she was "very easily led" and would follow people "if it was cool" but thinks she grew up by realising that the behaviour she indulged in when she was drunk was a mistake.

Sheila admits she "quite often" breaks socio-conventional laws related to age (eg: going to night-clubs) but is adamant that she would never harm people, either physically or emotionally, and attributes this attitude to her father's influence because "he's a very disciplined person." She says:

I'm no angel but I know right from wrong. Um some people call me - straight-laced is the word that has been used about me. ... I've always said "No" to things I don't want to do. I'm not pushed into anything. ... I've been told quite a few times [by other people] that they respect me for not doing drugs, drinking, smoking, what have you.

Sheila also believes she is "a very independent person" because of her father's advice to sensibly "go out and do it." However, since her mother's 'independence' seemed to lead to her suicide, Sheila is also aware of the irony in such advice. Perhaps Sheila's "straight-laced" attitude derives from the combined but possibly unspoken views of her father and herself regarding extreme independent behaviour.

Thelma says that drinking alcohol "in moderation" is acceptable and I am reminded that although Aaron was accused of being drunk when he was killed, Thelma says he was someone who "really could take his drink." She went to a night-club with Aaron's friends when she was under-age (14 years) but got caught and does not say she has been since. At the time he died, she may have needed him more as a social role model than anything else. Since she says, "When Aaron was killed I started going out with his friends and his girlfriend," it appears that, in the early stage of her grieving, she needed to be near those who had been with him when he died. Perhaps she has no other appropriate role models now these people are nearing their twenties.

Thelma states that she would not take drugs or steal and says she has got her moral ideas from her parents. In the light of Aaron's death I asked what sort of value she put on human life and she replied: "If you haven't got life, you haven't got anything at all, have you? It's very important." When asked if she has any moral absolutes in life she says:

I don't agree with violence - but I'd like to use it sometimes! I don't feel it's right, um, not the right way to solve things.

Both Thelma and Sheila share an abhorrence of violence (Sheila knows that her father is dangerous if he is violent and her mother caused her own death) and I see this view linked with care and respect for other people. In the following conversation about euthanasia, Rita's notion of a divine power controlling human 'timing' in the world as well as her sense of people's need for respect and autonomy are both evident.

Rita: ... I suppose your time comes when it comes, and you shouldn't really push it. Even though, thinking about this, I don't believe in it, I don't think.

VC: It's not ethical to do that, is that what you're saying?

Rita: I don't think it is.

VC: Would that be breaking a law?

Rita: Well, I suppose it's - I don't think it would be breaking the law...

VC: I mean *a* law, not *the* law of the land, but any kind of moral law.

Rita: It depends on each individual really. I mean, if that's the way they think, and *they've* had enough, then that's up to them. But I couldn't do that. I don't think that it's right really.

Although socio-conventional laws may be broken by all young people, those recently bereaved may be rather more inclined to believe that life must be lived now because of its brevity. Overall, refraining from harming others and respecting life seem to emerge as the two most important moral absolutes.

### **Self, other people and the peer group: justice, caring and empathy**

I have already indicated that Rita implies a form of divine injustice in the deaths of her brother and father when she says "it's very unfair when people go away when you don't want them to." As Rita's friend, it is not surprising that Verity also talks about the injustice of those deaths: "It seems really ignorant that Rita's family should have died because they were such a nice family..." Verity declares that Rita is "a great person, I don't know how she's managed to stay so nice," which implies that she thinks bereavement could - or perhaps should - change a person's personality and disposition.

I have already mentioned Thelma's enhanced appreciation of her parents and ambivalence about her own life following Aaron's death. Her recognition that life

can easily be lost is shown in her tendency for short term personal plans (planning a year at a time) and a wariness of anticipating marriage and children because "Well, I might be dead tomorrow!" Her explanation that it is not as easy to get into marriage as into college because "you've got to build up a relationship and - everything..." may further indicate her unwillingness to make longer term plans because of the uncertainty of life.

On the other hand, I would argue that bereavement has promoted greater caring and empathy in each of the four teenagers to some degree. Rita is aware of three other young people in similar bereaved circumstances to herself apart from Sheila and Verity, and says that the experience of bereavement itself

has definitely made me more aware of people's feelings. Maybe about death, but in general... I don't just come out with a real insensitive question - I don't now because I think "Well, that might hurt them or they might just be worried about this." So I think it has made me more sensitive in that area.

Verity says that she felt really sorry for Rita when she was bereaved but "because it wasn't me, I didn't know how she felt so I couldn't really think what it would be like." When Dawn died, though, Verity says, "I knew what it was like" and Rita, in turn, says she values Verity's friendship "because we've been through so much together." Both Rita and Verity work part-time in the same residential home and, after a recent death, Verity says "I could actually feel how they [bereaved residents] were feeling."

Regarding the taking of life, Sheila says that because suicide scares her and she is aware of how her mother's death has left her feeling, if she ever got close to considering suicide herself "it would make me sit down a bit longer and think, 'Well, could I really do this to other people?' " Seeing her father's grief and pain has probably had an influence on her views "because it upsets me to see him upset."

Despite Thelma's previous counselling experiences, the following dialogue indicates a willingness to do it again in order to help other people:

VC: How did your mum feel about you coming [here tonight]? What sort of thing did she say?

Thelma: Um, I don't think she was too sure at the moment because I think she saw you more as a counsellor. And, like now I know that you *are* - because mum knew that I went to that one before, she said, "Oh what's the point?" and I said to her, "If I can help someone else then it's worth it." And then I think she realised why I wanted to come.

It seems that bereaved people frequently examine the justness, rightness and appropriateness of a particular death and, over time, seem to develop an understanding of how other people may feel when they are in distress or suffering some kind of loss.

### **Global perspective: interest and involvement in national and world affairs**

I did not discuss the events of the world with Sheila and I did so in varying depth with the other three teenagers. When Thelma suggested that life is "an experiment that's gone wrong" and that "humans need to be kicked into line," I asked her to explain.

VC: But can we not undo this mad experiment, this bad experiment...?

Thelma: Yeah. I think that if everyone would work together rather than going off in their own little world and sorting themselves out and getting what they can, I think it would be a better place.

VC: How can we encourage people to do that? What *exi* - prevents them from doing that right now?

Thelma: I don't think there's very much awareness of what's going on in the world...

Thelma's final comment may also reflect her belief that school personnel lacked awareness of what was happening in her school when Aaron died.

Verity perceives the political and inter-national situation to be complex and competitive.

I just think that there are so much easier ways to go about things but because of rules and we have certain parties and there are people who have other opinions, you're not going to get what you want.

Rita remembers that her father often raised money for charity by cycling and running. When asked about war and famine and the plight of other people in the world, she says:

There are things we can do about it but it's just people's attitudes, isn't it? Some people's attitudes are: "Well, they're over there and we're over here." It's so stupid how some people - I mean, winning the national lottery is like giving away eighteen million pounds but they're over there starving. It's pathetic when you think about it. I mean, how much - we could give them so much with that money...

Verity also acknowledges that events such as Comic Relief make her "feel awful about the way I'm wingeing" because "I do have a good life, really."

Of 71 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 who answered whether they had ever taken part in any charity event, 25.3% had not and 74.6% had, and the most popular activities were walking, running and swimming. Sixty-six percent of 65 pupils answered 'yes' to the question whether "there is anything happening in the world that you read about or see on television that upsets or annoys you" and when asked if they would like to stop something happening 68.2% of 63 pupils said 'yes.' From the thirty-eight examples I could interpret, I generated three categories as follows:

- suffering of other people (20 examples, eg: IRA; fighting in the world and Yugoslavia; war; murders; people starving and dying)
- animals and the world (10 examples, eg: killing animals; cutting down trees; wrecking/killing the world; testing products on animals; bullfighting)
- self and other people's habits and tastes (5 examples: eg: parents separating; having to watch tennis and football on TV).

However, when asked if there are things happening that they are pleased about or which "makes you want to do the same," the positive responses in Year 7 were respectively 34% and 35%. I grouped the 12 examples given into three categories.

- animals, other people and the world (7 examples: baby guinea pigs; recovery of our world; raising money for something; saving someone's life; helping people, fewer people smoking)
- personal ambitions (3 examples, eg: become nurse)
- personal pleasures (2 examples, eg: received a present).

The overall feeling I have is that the majority of young people are prepared to take part in fund raising activities to help human and animal causes and that about 2 out of every 3 are displeased with what they see happening in the world. This perspective was well explained by Sophia (aged 11):

I hate watching the news because of all the fighting. I want to stop it and to make people like each other. I am pleased to think that there are people out there that are trying to help.

Since the world views that children and young people hold come mainly from television information delivered in short, repetitive sound-bytes, stories which are spectacular, repeated frequently and connect with children's experiences are best remembered. Some pictures - of Africa, for example, which tend to be only of war, starvation and poverty - are probably incoherent and isolated. Although such a presentation of information is likely to overstate negative views and seems to encourage young people to reject or not think worth emulating much that the television shows them of life, it is interesting that many of them persist in opposing such a negative scenario. Fashionable media, such as Michael Jackson's music video Earth Song (1995), may encourage this attitude.

### **Cosmic perspectives and influence of other people, including the deceased**

I think that the ideals and interests of deceased parents rather than siblings are likely to exert an influence on the thinking of 16-17 year olds as they make career plans. Sheila, however, declares that she and her mother are different in at least one respect.

I'm not going around being depressed and morbid and whatever else you like to call it because she chose to end it. Because I've still got *my* life, even though she didn't like hers.

Sheila's determination to "make something of my life" by taking A levels and aiming for a teaching degree (in order to work with handicapped children) stems from her stepmother's belief that she was prevented by *her* parents from achieving success in her chosen field. However, Sheila has recently been told by her father that her mother also worked with handicapped adults and, in this sense, she is following in her mother's career.

Since Rita says that she sometimes wonders what her father "would think of me *now* as a person," I asked her to explain his influence on her career plans.

... I might think to myself, "Oh, I wonder if he would have been behind me in this decision"... But other than that I don't think it would affect me. I just think about whether he would think that would be a good idea or if he would be pleased if I went off to university or had to get a job...

Thelma and Verity do not directly mention their deceased siblings regarding their career plans but I think that Verity's tendency to rate herself beneath other people has been exacerbated by her bereavement experiences. As well as considering herself inferior to her deceased sister (see theme 1), she regards her loss as less significant than Rita's:

I've never, never spoken about it because everyone else's problems seem to be more. If I said to Rita how upset I was because my sister died I'd feel really silly because she's been through a lot.

Although Thelma also suffers from low self-confidence, it is difficult to say whether Aaron's death precipitated or overshadowed this personality trait. Overall, however, Thelma considers the disposition of humanity to be "foolish" rather than "sinful" and, interestingly, she hints at long-term phylogenetic progress.

... although we've been here for a very long time, it's just early days yet. We've got a lot to learn. It'll take a lot more generations to figure out what's got to be done.

Some of her thinking about generational improvement may be understood from her description of Aaron as "quite an old spirit." She says he was "too old for his years" and "very wise" because he had "done so much" in terms of a career and helping in the home. When her grandmother died in the week just before Aaron's death, Thelma's family told her: "Oh, Mum's up there to take care of one of the young uns." Perhaps Thelma sees Aaron's wisdom adding to the accumulated wisdom of our ancestors in order to be recycled in future generations.

### **Overview of moral and spiritual development**

In this section I can only say I have detected trends in what is, after all, a very small sample. There are six aspects to explore. First, there seems to be a tendency for some bereaved people to make use of traditional beliefs and practices in order to search for an answer. Rita joined a church after the death but later left and Verity was already involved in church life but left some time after the death. However, Sheila and Thelma were never regular attendees. Currently none of the four regularly attend which reflects the broader picture of non-attendance at a place of worship by most children and young people in my sample.

Second, belief in God and the concept of a loving and just God seems to be challenged by bereavement. Although Rita and Verity accept this dichotomy, they struggle with how it works and Thelma rejects any notion of a loving God because of the death of several loved ones. Overall, there is general ambivalence among these children and young people towards the notion of a caring God but a tendency towards some sort of belief displayed in scientific and traditional religious concepts.

Third, some bereaved people seem to have a definite sense of the deceased with them. They talk to them, feel them with them at certain times and may even imagine them ageing in their minds. My findings indicate that overall, there is

uncertainty about a sense of God's presence among children and young people but a strong belief that God can or may be present at times of distress, especially after a death.

Fourth, although my findings suggest a prevalence of medical explanations and a decline in moral or spiritual reasons for death as children get older, there is still an overall tendency to give comfort to bereaved people using moral notions of quality of life lived, release from pain, resting in heaven or being at peace.

Fifth, there is a growing range of literature in bookshops and libraries offering alternative explanations to traditional Christianity as well as an increased acceptance of spiritualist mediums within society. Having a sense of the presence of the deceased or desiring to get in touch with them may lead to an exploration of spiritualism, while surviving life-threatening circumstances because of improved medical care leads to more accounts of NDEs being available to shape people's beliefs. There may be an increased belief in after-death autonomy - a 'go where you expect to go' philosophy - and, with age, a discarding of belief in heaven and hell (particularly hell) unless one's religious affiliations promote it. There may be a tendency to move towards an ecological-biological sense of continuity as well as a belief, as people age, that we, and no-one else can give meaning to our lives.

Sixth, my research shows that there may be a tendency in the early stages of bereavement for children and young people in particular to 'live for the moment.' This may show itself in anger and defiance at constricting socio-conventional rules (both Thelma and Verity broke or pushed against such laws after bereavement) and this attitude may prevail for some time (Thelma is still hesitant to make many long term plans). However, my small sample suggests an increased awareness of and empathy with grieving people and the emergence of clearer views about constraints on hurting or harming people and a valuing of life itself.

Overall, media views of 'other people' in need of help and of world affairs seem both to promote a desire to help and a dissatisfaction with the state of world events which, inevitably, involve suffering and death. A cosmic perspective of life, with the deceased watching over or guiding their relatives and ancestors, can be found in the replies of several respondents.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS**

Part One of this thesis explored a range of theories regarding human, moral and spiritual development, bearing in mind my contention that the second and third forms do not exist in their own right and can only be expressed through the core components of human development: body, mind and emotions. This analysis enabled me to identify the significance of such notions as end-state, intention and human intervention in moral development, those of dualism and continuity-discontinuity in spiritual development, as well as the prevalence of two main developmental issues (continuity-discontinuity and nature-nurture interactions) in both my data and religio-philosophical ideas about death. I also recognized the importance of discussing real-life situations rather than hypothetical dilemmas when exploring moral and spiritual development after a death, and identification of the inter-relatedness of the principles of justice and care in the data enabled me to devise a unifying model of awareness-relatedness derived from Kohlberg's thinking.

Regarding children and young people, I suggest that broad nomothetic laws may be applied to both development and bereavement processes - although they need to be balanced by idiographic variations - and that any form of development that schools can reasonably promote in their 5-16 or 18 year old pupils relates to only a small part of their expected life-span since development of any kind may be viewed from three viewpoints (completed so far, happening now and future outcome).

This chapter, which has three sections, draws together some of the themes from the previous chapters. In the first section I consider the limitations of the research undertaken and, in the second, what the implications of my findings are despite those limitations. In the third section I suggest how future research in this area might develop. However, before doing this, I need to state that I found it harder than I expected to analyse my respondents regarding exactly the same issues,

ideas and theories of morality and spirituality that I reviewed in Part One. I think this is because questionnaire responses did not easily lend themselves to such interpretations and interviews with the four key respondents mainly focused on bereavement issues and religio-spiritual thinking. It is also likely that it is easier to analyse other people's work than one's own.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

There are four features of my research that I think need explaining further: the composition of the sample, ethics of informed consent, notions of truth and significance of mood in memory recollection, and the narrative nature of interviews.

### **The research sample**

The opportunistic nature of my research means that in all cases the individuals and classes I spoke to were links in a chain of introductions. The adult respondents were not 'typical' of the average population since they were all graduates engaged in professions such as education, theology and social work and the 'Sea of Faith' conference delegates are likely to have non-theistic or post-Christian beliefs. None of the 16-17 year old interviewees bereaved of a parent or sibling was male and most of my material comes from 119 young people aged 11-18, particularly from four females. However, as previously explained, the sex imbalance was not intentional and the graduate status and type of my respondents reflect similar research. For example, Hay (1990) suggests that more educated church-goers are likely to hold unorthodox beliefs, and Starbuck (1901) realized that people who are more favourably disposed to participating in this kind of research are those who have - or think they have - some experience of the topics in question.

## **Informed consent and anonymity**

I explained in chapter six that I removed the promise to show respondents how their work would be used when I realized I could not do so if they answered anonymously or if I did not know how to contact them again. I also suggested that the completion of questionnaires in class did not allow pupils to freely consent to taking part in the work although it enabled me to obtain a fairly broad cross-section of responses. Not giving respondents (particularly the four key respondents) a 'right of reply' regarding how I use their words may seem unethical but doing so presented difficulties in terms of how to contact them, how much of my work (including their words) to show, how to redraft my work in the light of their comments (if any), and how long to wait for a response. As I had told them I would not contact them again, trying to get their agreement a year later not only broke that promise of anonymity but also seemed to expect from them an unreasonable level of involvement in my work.

## **Truth, mood and memory**

In some cases the interview (or interviews) seemed to be a catalyst which produced changes in ideas and perspectives as the dialogue continued over time and, sometimes when I transcribed interviews, I saw inconsistencies in what respondents said as they explored their ideas or relaxed in my company (Pope and Denicolo, 1986). For example, in our first conversation Rita stated that she was a Christian but the next time we met she said, "I think I just said that." There is a sense in which what my respondents told me is only true for that moment in time, since asking them questions not only provoked them into answering, but also helped to shape the way they thought then and when I next spoke to them.

There is some evidence that adults recall an event better if they are able to relive during recall the same emotion they experienced at the time of the event (Bower, 1981, Snyder and White, 1982), although Forgas et al (1988) conclude that

children (eg: 8-10 years) do not seem to use mood states as retrieval cues to the same extent as adults. In interviews I always attempted to keep the mood light but serious. I used eye contact and non-verbal cues, laughed when I thought it helped and kept silent, using empathic encouragement, when the story was upsetting. I did not try to induce a particular emotion, to stop the respondent from crying or to refrain from crying myself so I cannot tell whether the light-but-serious mood facilitated such good recall as a sad mood might have done.

Although important childhood memories such as the death of a close family member are unlikely to be influenced by mood and context during recall because such memories are vivid and well rehearsed (Salovey and Singer, 1989) with many emotional events captured as 'flashbulb' memories, it is possible that successive accounts can introduce distortions (Brewer, 1986). Therefore I expected that the death itself would not be forgotten, that some parts of the story would be more vivid than other parts (Verity remembers writing a note - but not what she wrote - to go in her sister's coffin) and that repetition might have caused parts of the story to change over time. For example, Thelma gives an account of what she remembers her form tutor saying when she mentioned her brother's death but it is unlikely that, "Oh, you'll be wanting the day off for the funeral then," is exactly what her tutor said. That phrase is probably Thelma's way of telling the story in order to communicate the tone of what she *feels* her tutor said.

'Childhood amnesia' may also affect what respondents told me because humans have limited memories of incidents before 5 years or so (Wetzler and Sweeney, 1986). Rita talked a lot about her early years being "blurry" and Sheila knows she was sent to play with a friend on the day her mother committed suicide but does not remember where she stayed that night.

Snyder and White (1982, p 166) suggest that attempting to understand and cope with one's mood states by thinking through the events of one's life (as I asked my respondents to do regarding the death of a family member) "may have the

unintended effect of consolidating and perpetuating one's mood state." In other words, I may have unwittingly consolidated the attitudes that Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity held about themselves by asking them to talk about their feelings at the time of death and during our interviews.

### **Interviews as narrative accounts**

Interviews connect together information which might otherwise be given in separate chunks on questionnaires but they need to be interpreted within their context. Unlike ordinary conversation, interviews are a particular kind of conversation because they involve talking to a specific purpose, and the tape-recorder always reminded the respondent and me that this apparently private conversation was going to be replayed and reread, possibly by other people (Hull, 1985).

Interviewees assume, quite reasonably, that interviewers know what they are looking for and, although I tried to explain that I did not know what the answers to my questions would be, I am sure that my responses (eg: laughter, smile, surprised look) often indicated that I thought the answers were the 'right' ones. Of this "phenomenological construct" Briggs (1986, p 25) observes:

Interviewees interpret the meaning of both the past and the present, including the interview itself. Each query presents them with the task of searching through their memories to see which recollections bear on the question and then fitting this information into a form that will be seen as answering the question.

### **Summary**

The predominance of females in the sample (particularly at the heart of the work) and the above-average standard of education attained by all the adults mean that my findings cannot represent a wider population. Although I am fairly confident that the mood of interviews was appropriate for the particular respondents involved, some research suggests that recall may have been better using other

strategies. However, I believe I found evidence of ideas, emotions and behaviour that I can define as moral and spiritual development when I encouraged the four key respondents to talk about their experiences in depth, but I cannot say that such development after a bereavement is true of all the sample.

## **IMPLICATIONS FROM MY FINDINGS**

There are three broad areas to consider which reflect the developmental themes I explored in Part One of this thesis and discussed in chapter 7: the core self and stages of development; moral and spiritual development; and the role of schools and OFSTED.

### **Bereavement, the core self and stages of development**

Since the experience of bereavement occurs while physical maturation and cognition and emotions are developing, any response to death will be influenced by the extent and level of these forms of development.

#### ***Cognitive and emotional development***

Many respondents felt shocked after a death and metaphors of "in a dream" and "blurry" were used by Thelma and Rita to describe how difficult it was to take in what had happened. With hindsight, Rita thinks she became quieter immediately after the second death, Thelma sees that she went out socializing to try to enjoy herself and Sheila knows she developed a tendency to become depressed. Some Year 7 respondents wrote that they were "still" or "sometimes" sad about their loss while Year 10 respondents tended to say they felt "OK."

However, some Year 7 respondents also said they were more self-aware, or more appreciative of family members and other people, or aware of the fragility of life. Both Rita and Sheila expressed positive attitudes towards life and Rita believed that experiencing bereavement early in life had made her grow up quicker. In my

sample there seems to be some evidence that those who were bereaved when young (under 10 years) were less aware of the meaning of the death than those who were bereaved when older (11-18 years) since with age there is an increased understanding of the finality of death (and its social, financial and religious implications), sorrow at the loss of an emotional attachments developed over time as well as a reassessment of the value of oneself, other people and life itself.

### ***Causal reasoning***

The deaths of Thelma's brother and Rita's brother and father were from road or rail accidents. Rita says people did not try "to make a reason" for their deaths although *she* constructs a logical connection between her father going after the dog on the railway line and his death, and Thelma finds it hard to accept that a driver would carry on at the same speed when he saw people crossing the road. Both teenagers want to attribute causes to the deaths - although Rita may have done this later in life since, at the time, she seems to have accepted that "it was one of those things." Their desire to blame or find a cause is common after negative events (Schwartz and Bless, 1991) particularly unpleasant rather than merely unexpected ones (Bohner et al, 1988).

The most common reasons given to Year 7 pupils for death were medical ones while the most common forms of comfort given were in moral terms or in religious/spiritual terms regarding the deceased's destination. Thelma's comment that she searched for a spiritual reason when she could not have a medical or other causal reason for her brother's death has implications for the way both moral and spiritual concepts are used in the event of death. It may not be out of order to suggest that they are used when all other explanations fail.

### ***Sex differences***

Out of 72 pupils in Maxwell Year 7 (46 females, 26 males), only 1 pupil (male) answered all 40 questions on the questionnaire - mostly with one-word answers - and 18 pupils (16 females, 2 males) answered 35-39 of the questions. Therefore

only 16 females (34% of females) and 3 males (11% of males) answered 35 or more questions. Although I have indicated in chapter 6 that this may be because I did not allow enough time, it may also be because the answers were difficult to remember (eg: What else was happening in your life at about the time of that death?) or to formulate (eg: How did you feel, or what did you think, at the time of the death?). With regard to the latter difficulty, I reported in chapter 7 that when explaining why a particular death was important or significant, 19 girls but no boys gave reasons (eg: having feelings for or spending time with the deceased) and it is possible that males find it harder to give these kind of answers. Overall in Year 7, proportionately fewer males than females answered all questions or answered them in depth and this may reveal something about their willingness or ability to write about themselves.

These findings are interesting in the light of Gilligan's (1982) assertion that females tend to define themselves by their closeness to people and males by their separateness from them. It is worth noting that Kohlberg (1958) used only 75 males aged 10-16 in his original study and that they discussed (not wrote about) hypothetical dilemmas (not real-life situations of loss).

### ***Psychosocial stages of development***

Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity are in Levinson's early adulthood transition simply by dint of being old enough to leave school and having to make career choices. They are just entering Jung's second quarter of life and are in Erikson's intimacy-isolation stage.

According to Coleman (1980), different relationship issues peak at different ages and Rita, Verity and Sheila each have boyfriends and spend substantial amounts of time out of the home away from their parent(s). However, it is possible to conjecture that, at nearly 17, Thelma is finding it difficult both to separate from her parents and to establish relationships with a peer group. Her account of how her parents reacted to Aaron's death ("Mum was a total mess. Dad just shut himself

away. We didn't really talk to each other much.") reflects Mufson's (1985) view that parental grief may force certain responses from surviving siblings such as: trying to be normal as a model of behaviour for them to copy, frustration at being unable to comfort them, or fear of being overwhelmed by their grief. Thelma seems to have adopted the first option for a year or so by going out regularly with Aaron's friends but is finding it difficult to separate from her parents now.

## **Summary**

The ability to comprehend the implications of death depends upon physical, cognitive and emotional forms of development. Shock is likely during the early phase of grief and sorrow may persist for some time. As people age, they are able to make better links between cause and outcome due to improved logic, social-perspective and role-taking, but socio-cultural norms of separation from family of origin may be affected by death, particularly of a sibling or parent. Some differences between males and females regarding the ability or willingness to write or talk about themselves seem apparent.

## **Bereavement and theories of moral and spiritual development**

Moral and spiritual responses may be expressed in notions of duty, consequences and virtues, and through personal, devotional and practical forms of spirituality.

### ***Traditional religion and God***

Thirty-three percent of 72 Year 7 pupils said they had been brought up within a particular religious tradition but only 19% of 57 pupils currently attend a place of worship. Although Rita began to attend church after her father's death, Verity stopped attending some time afterwards, and Sheila and Thelma never go. The decline in church attendance may have implications for schools, particularly for RE lessons, since schools could become the only source of knowledge and information about traditional beliefs for many children and young people.

The conclusions of the majority (57) of Year 5, 7 and 10 pupils that God does not or may not exist or is ineffective in their daily lives probably reflects their experience - or how they interpret their experience. The dilemma in asking the question is that if something has a name it is usually presumed to exist (Matthews, 1982) and it is confusing to ask whether something exists which can be named. Rizzuto (1980, p 130) argues that "God's privileged survival" in our thinking depends upon adult confirmation that there is a God (eg: my questionnaire) and the sociocultural system which supports such a belief (eg: places of worship).

Rita and Thelma both wonder how a loving God could allow suffering and death and Thelma denies God's existence because of several family deaths, particularly that of her brother. These findings may relate to Rizzuto's (1980) proposition that people create their God representation and their relation to God from experiences with the people of their childhood (mainly their parents) and Vergote's (1980) idea that paternal factors of authority and law and maternal factors of unconditional love form a representation of God. Rita and Thelma get on with their mothers very well (Rita's father is dead and Thelma's father is distant) and it is possible to suggest that since their concept of God is predominantly loving (eg: maternal) they find it hard to accept a law-giving and obedience-demanding God (eg: paternal). Interestingly, despite quite a lot of ambivalence regarding God's existence, 60 pupils from Years 5, 7 and 10 consider that God or a divine power could be near them or another person after someone dies. This finding seems to indicate a need for comfort and love at such a time - a desire for a mainly maternal, rather than paternal God representation.

### ***Moral laws and principles***

There is no direct evidence that their bereaved state encouraged any of the teenagers I interviewed to break socio-conventional laws although the only time Thelma went to a night-club when underage was when she 'ran wild' with Aaron's

friends. However, bereavement does seem to have enhanced their awareness of other people's feelings and begun to clarify principles concerning violence towards other people and whether it is ever right to end another's life. They have moved from a belief that there are given correct answers in every situation (Verity: "I used to think, you know, that the bad died, but that's really stupid") and are realizing that they have to work out correct answers for themselves (Rita: "I mean if that's the way they think, and *they've* had enough, then that's up to them. But I couldn't do that," and Thelma: "I've got to take more responsibility for my actions or things will backfire on me"). Finally they will reach the stage of acknowledging that there are many 'correct' answers (Perry, 1970) rather in the way that Sheila says:

Because of different people's lives and different people's outlook, beliefs, whatever, I maintain the fact that different people go different ways.

### ***Moral and spiritual stages***

Rita, Sheila, Thelma and Verity *seem* to display characteristics of what Fowler (1981) calls synthetic-conventional faith (stage 3), a conformist stage "tuned to the expectations and judgements of significant others" (p 172) - although I feel that Sheila is beginning to move towards a transition to the next stage because of a clash of values at home involving her career plans and a need to know more about her mother's suicide. It is harder to assess where they fall in Kohlberg's scheme since they did not discuss deontological issues and I do not have (and did not need to acquire) a scoring handbook, but some of the descriptions of stage 3 (conventional level) seem to apply (Kohlberg and Ryncarz, 1990, p 193) (See Appendix 1):

What is right is what is expected by people close... or what people generally expect of people in one's role as [daughter]... Being 'good' is important and means having motives, showing concern about others. It also means keeping mutual relationships, maintaining trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude.

### ***Moral and spiritual development***

One aspect of the work that I had not considered at the outset but which I feel must be recognised is that *the research itself* promoted moral and spiritual

development in the form of insights and reflection. The most outstanding is Thelma's insight during the course of our first interview (my italics).

Thelma: I think that I did a lot of growing up a few years ago because I was trying to help mum get herself together. And - but - I suppose there was so much pressure at home and trying to keep everyone happy - stop mum from having a nervous breakdown - *at school I just couldn't be bothered. I was too drained, I think.*

VC: Do you know, I think you've put your finger on it there, probably. I mean, whether you've noticed it before but it sounds.....

Thelma: No, not until I said it just then!

When she returned the following week I asked, by way of debriefing, whether our previous conversation had had any further impact.

Thelma: Yeah. Yeah. It's made me understand a lot about myself.

VC: Has it?

Thelma: When I was thinking about some of the questions you'd asked and I thought: "Oh, *that's* why I did that" - like about school.

During the course of my first conversation with Verity a similar insight occurred.

VC: Have you thought about this a lot since she died, or have you been thinking about it much more positively, more deeply, because you knew you were going to talk to me about it? ...

Verity: I was just going to say that I didn't know I thought about it as much as I have actually. ... When Fiona phoned me up this morning and said you've got an interview today I hadn't really thought about what I was going to say...

In their last interview both Rita and Sheila reflected on what the conversations with me had meant to them.

Rita: Um, I think I have sort of changed a bit because before I didn't...

VC: Before?

Rita: Well, I don't know, before these sessions maybe. I didn't really think about it a lot - about, you know, all these questions - it's really made me think, which is really good. Um, and I think through these sessions it's made me change. I think to myself, "Well, I've got to live my life now, because otherwise I might not be here tomorrow." So I might as well live today.

★

VC: Is there anything you want to share with me about thoughts that arose after what we were saying last week?

Sheila: Well it made me *think* about death. Rita said something that has become very apparent to me, just talking to you, she said that you look at death in a completely different light. And that you live for the moment more. Sort of, it makes you think about death as in the end, so live whilst you've got it....

Of course I know that the act of talking something through or the process of counselling is likely to produce new thoughts and feelings. Although I did not attempt to offer counselling per se, there is no doubt that the sessions involved all the elements of a counselling session (with the exception that the respondent had not asked to be counselled because of perceived bereavement difficulties) so these insights are to be expected. In fact Cook and Bosley (1995) suggest that, when conducted in an ethical manner, bereavement research will often have therapeutic outcomes. What I want to highlight here, though, is that these insights *are* examples of moral and spiritual development and that they are direct outcomes of the research itself.

## **Summary**

Decline in church attendance may mean that schools could become significant disseminators of information about traditional beliefs. However, asking pupils about belief in God or a divine spirit may be confusing since such ideas, which are socio-culturally influenced and may be challenged or reinforced by the death of a loved one, cannot be proved or disproved. As teenagers realize the increasing complexity of moral issues, they usually start to find answers for themselves and dismiss the belief that absolute moral answers exist. Such moral and spiritual development may be assisted by research which asks people to reflect on and make sense of their lives and experiences.

## **Bereaved pupils, schools and OFSTED**

The ERA (1988) talks about the "development of pupils at school and of society" but the education process can only deal with the years of schooling (5-18 years) which is a fraction of the average late twentieth-century person's life span. OFSTED's focus on the provision by schools for moral and spiritual development needs to be balanced against the wider context of both pupils' and teachers' lives.

## **Bereaved pupils and their teachers**

Not surprisingly, personal and educational events seem to be the two most significant markers in pupils' lives during their compulsory school career. I am interested in what happens when the two events coincide and my findings indicate some variations in how bereaved pupils perceive their schools treated them. At primary school both Rita and Thelma felt supported and Rita's teacher was sufficiently confident to break the news of Rita's father's death and, later, kept her from hearing a police talk on rail safety that she judged might upset her.

However, staff at Rita and Thelma's secondary school seemed less able to display such support. In Rita's case this may be because at least three years had passed since her father's death and, although some staff seemed to know why she cried and left the talk about rail safety in the hall, it is unlikely that all staff knew since she had been at another school when the death occurred. Issues of record keeping and confidentiality need careful consideration in these circumstances. Although Rita's secondary school form tutor would have read her primary school records, she/he might not have been timetabled to attend the talk in the hall and, if not, might not have known whether to tell another member of staff who was present of Rita's loss. Furthermore, even if she/he was present, it would not have been unreasonable to consider that three years was long enough for Rita to have adjusted (see chapter 5). It is often hard to assess how long is 'long enough' although Casdagli et al (1992, p 9) describe how a member of staff at one school "had not made the connection" between the story of their play Grief and the recent identical experience of one of her pupils until that pupil walked out of the performance.

Thelma lays the blame for her subsequent truancy on the off-hand response she felt her form tutor gave her when she asked for time off to go to Aaron's funeral and how "another member of staff said he was playing chicken to other pupils." She says:

I think probably because two had said, you know, had said things about it that I didn't like, perhaps I turned against the rest of them.

She says it is unlikely that staff did not know of her bereaved state since the story was in the papers and Aaron, who had left school some years earlier, "was always in trouble in class and everything." There are several issues here that I did not unravel at the time due to Thelma's distressed state. One is the perceived character of the people involved since Thelma implies that her brother had been a troublesome pupil and, perhaps, had not been much liked by some members of staff. She also says that she was an average pupil before Aaron died and adds: "Well, I never really liked school." Taken together, it is possible to conjecture that (a) some staff might have implied that Aaron's death was caused by reckless behaviour in keeping with his behaviour when at school and (b) Thelma's absences were not a cause for concern for some time because her academic abilities were not highly rated.

The second issue is the atmosphere of the school after such an event. Although guidelines are now available to help schools when members of their community are bereaved (Yule and Gold, 1993), the issue of bereavement itself is not new. Schools have always had to cope with death, deciding how to inform and discuss such an event with staff and pupils and what support to provide. It seems that Thelma's secondary school staff did not do this as well as they might have done and, although they offered counselling when her absences were impossible to ignore, they failed to make the connection between bereavement and truancy.

### ***Provision for moral and spiritual development and bereaved pupils***

OFSTED (1992, 5.3) suggests that "the general ethos" of the school contributes to the code of practice promoting moral and spiritual development and, when death affects members of the school population, I think that such an atmosphere should exclude rumour, confrontation and avoidance tactics. Furthermore, OFSTED (1994b, p 12) describes schools failing or likely to fail as having "abrasive and

confrontational relationships with pupils" and (particularly relevant to Thelma's situation) "high levels of truancy."

Any behavioural or emotional response to a death which could cause the school to appear unfavourably at an OFSTED inspection needs further exploration. Although Thelma's truancy and disagreements with staff cannot be described in any other way, school staff could well argue that the event that caused her to change was beyond their power to predict or control. They may have been under great pressure when Aaron died on 30th June because of examinations and end of term and year activities, and we do not know the kind of relationship that existed between Thelma and her tutor before Aaron died or the personal circumstances of the tutor at that time.

#### ***Absence from school because of death***

Some of my data suggests that parents may find it difficult to decide whether their children should attend a funeral because of exams or pressure of work. Since even national exams can be taken at another time there does not seem any reason for this, and absence for one or two days ought to be acceptable for an event that is unpredictable and unique.

However, absence for compassionate leave is harder to justify because of the sense of 'missing a lot of work' that Melanie describes (see chapter 7). Teachers, parents and pupils seem to have a belief that continuity of attendance parallels continuity of learning (which reflects the theme of direction in development) and that, since time cannot be recovered, it is impossible to take much time off school when relatives die. Furthermore, the decision whether or not to take time off is influenced by the steady decline in grieving and mourning practices since World War II so that people either do not see the need to 'stop' normal life in order to adjust to a death or consider that it is 'unnatural' to do so.

## **Summary**

School is an important context for bereavement for children aged 5 to 16 or 18. Exams and school life provide normative markers against which the unpredictable event of death and the grieving process must take place. Primary school staff may be better able to respond to death and support grieving pupils because their institutions are smaller and more flexible than secondary schools. Secondary school staff have the more difficult job of assessing relevant bereavement information from primary school records, deciding the extent to which pupils have 'recovered' from or adjusted to long past and recent deaths (see chapter 5), and balancing the demands of academic progress against the need to grieve.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH IN THIS AREA**

There are seven aspects that I want to discuss in conclusion: the naturalness of the bereavement experience; the typicality of bereavement research and sex differences in the findings; ethical issues of working with children and young people; methods of conducting research; training and experience of researchers, and the development of new initiatives.

### **Death as natural event and bereavement as unplanned unique experience**

It is important to bear in mind these two apparently contradictory points of view, which I have previously mentioned in this thesis. Most humans respond according to nomothetic laws and exhibit physical, cognitive and emotional responses during periods such as bereavement that, although varied, can be identified in the literature. However, each person also follows idiographic laws influenced by such things as her or his individual relationship with the deceased and personality and socio-cultural contexts. Although there has been a valuable increase in recent years in attention to bereaved people, including children and young people, a future balance needs to be maintained between perceiving *any*

bereavement as potentially troublesome and seeing the death of loved ones as natural and inevitable life experiences that contribute to human development. One never ceases to be bereaved - in fact the event of death recurs throughout one's life - so it is not unreasonable to suggest that development involves coping with grief and grieving, and that bereavement, like development, is on-going.

### **Typical or genuine findings**

Since reviews of bereavement research with adults suggest that less depressed widowers and more depressed widows tend to participate in studies - perhaps because of social norms which encourage females to show their feelings and men to control them - it is always difficult to know how far any research is typical with a small sample of self-selected bereaved people. In addition, questionnaire investigations generally have a higher acceptance rate than interview investigations, although the authority given to the researcher by medical or religious associations seems to increase the likelihood of co-operation in both forms (Stroebe and Stroebe, 1989).

The problem is - and continues to be - determining how representative any sample is of the total population since some people may take part because of a need to talk about their experience and others may decline through fear of 'breaking down.' As most children and young people will not lose a parent or sibling by death during their compulsory school education, those who do are not typical of *all* pupils, only of a small number. Hesitancy by parents and school staff to let pupils talk about death may prevent larger numbers from taking part in any research of this kind.

### **Sex of respondents**

There happened to be slightly fewer males (51) than females (57) in the two schools where I used questionnaires to obtain data and I found it difficult to find

any males to interview whose parent, sibling or other significant relative had died (see chapter 6). The literature reflects a similar picture: Gray (1987) interviewed 16 male and 34 females whose parent had died; Hogan and DeSantis (1992) used questionnaires with 50 male and 91 female siblings; and Schachter (1991) used questionnaires with 19 males and 42 females bereaved of a peer.

Although these figures do not mean that the voice of males is not being heard, it does suggest that fewer males tend to volunteer for such research since there is no statistical likelihood of more females than males being bereaved of a parent, sibling or friend. It is gradually being acknowledged that too much research on adults focuses on widows (Kollar, 1990) but it is not yet apparent that too little research on children and young people focuses on males.

Since taking part in bereavement research inevitably involves talking about feelings and personal development, it seems essential to enable more males to feel comfortable doing this. Pupils in Years 5 and 10 said the most common form of remembering the dead was through photographs, films, videos and tape recordings and these everyday objects could be used more extensively in lessons (eg: PSE, English, history, RE) to encourage the sharing of personal experiences and memories of the dead.

### **Ethics of the work itself and of working in schools**

Linking bereavement with moral and spiritual development involves asking questions about an experience that may cause distress and relating the answers to forms of development that have subjective and normative interpretations. It also involves asking children and young people questions that adults might consider intrusive and inappropriate.

It is the kind of research in which respondents have to think, feel and talk about themselves in more depth than usual - they cannot be merely observed working in

an ordinary school situation - and the risks and benefits of taking part have to be explained to them. Although it is unusual for respondents to contact researchers to report negative outcomes, this may not mean that there are none (Cook, 1995), and children and young people are likely to find it harder than adults to take the initiative in explaining to a researcher how they feel.

As I have shown, morality tends to be perceived mainly in behavioural terms and spirituality tends to be considered a largely private and personal (often religious) affair. Since it is easier to talk or write about ideas and feelings than to describe behaviour, research using these methods cannot assess what people do, only what they say they do, and it is not possible to observe whether pupils behave towards each other in accordance with how they say they should.

There is constraint on research of this kind in schools if the researcher is unknown to the pupils because of issues of access, confidentiality and distress but, if the researcher is known to pupils and/or teaches them, such work may amount to a breach of confidentiality. Despite my misgivings about asking pupils to answer questionnaires in lessons, it is possible that they felt comfortable about doing so because they knew they would never see me again. I think the difficulties of working as a teacher-counsellor in school (either teaching clients or counselling pupils) is similar to the teacher-researcher dilemma, particularly in a sensitive area such as bereavement.

### **Questionnaires, interviews and hypothetical dilemmas**

It is important to use ways of recording data with which children and young people are familiar and I think interviews are likely to be more successful than questionnaires although they contain the potential for face-to-face distress and involve all the technical features of note-taking, recording and transcribing. Questionnaires require good reading skills, a willingness to write at length and, often, an ability to interpret questions in an either/or way. However, their

impersonal nature may encourage some respondents who prefer not to *talk* about their experiences to complete them in preference to an interview.

As well as the opportunity to distance respondents from a death situation, hypothetical dilemmas can encourage problem-solving and deontological or consequential thinking or a discussion of relevant virtues. Being asked to give narrative accounts or written explanations of one's past is different from being asked to work out *what one would do* in a future situation and, because of this, it is important to recognize that the two approaches may chart two different moral (and spiritual) trajectories (Tappan, 1989).

### **Role and approach of researcher**

It is vital that people undertaking bereavement research with children and young people are aware of their own losses and able to respond appropriately to distress and crying in others.

The quality of the information elicited in the interview and the potential distress experienced by the bereaved individual during it appear to be highly dependent on the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Cook, 1995, p 118).

I would not have undertaken this research without counselling training and experience of working for 'Cruse' and, ideally, I should have had a bereavement supervisor (Parkes, 1995) as well as an academic supervisor. Although teachers may be trained counsellors, as I explained above, I think it is difficult to combine counselling with classroom teaching. In any future work researchers need to make clear distinctions between their role in educational institutions and others who work there.

### **New Initiatives and areas of research**

The county of Gloucestershire has introduced a programme entitled 'Winston's Wish' to enable teachers and other professionals to support bereaved children

and young people aged 5-14 (Gisborne, 1995; Meddings, 1996). Similar projects involving the training of teachers are necessary as well as research that asks them what kind of training and resources they think they need (Eiser et al, 1995) and how they have responded to loss by death in the lives of their pupils (Leckey, 1991).

Although it seems important to train - or at least alert - teachers to the possibility of having to teach a bereaved pupil and of the need to respond in an appropriate way, many teachers learn what to do when first faced with the situation (Anonymous, 1995) either on teaching practice (Gulliver, 1991) or as a qualified teacher. There are few opportunities within BEd or PGCE courses for all students to get such training, mainly because of a focus on curriculum delivery, so that the few courses that run are usually optional.

Despite this lack of training, however, many experienced teachers are aware of having taught bereaved children and have noticed behavioural changes in them (Leckey, 1991). Many consider it to be part of their role to teach about death and dying and do so using limited material - mainly in PSE or RE - although there are also opportunities within citizenship and health education themes (Eiser et al, 1995). In Scotland trained 'Cruse' counsellors are working with pupils and training school staff (Smith, 1993) and the 'BBC Children in Need Appeal' currently funds a children's counsellor for Wales to train 'Cruse' counsellors and give talks in schools (Steffer, 1995; 1996)

There is a need to explore school policies and guidelines regarding bereavement and disaster (Doherty, 1991) since many schools do not have a defined policy about how to cope with bereaved children (Leckey, 1991), despite the efforts of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to provide every school in the UK with a free copy of guidelines to help them do so (Yule and Gold, 1993). Apart from surveying school staff, such research could ask pupils what they feel their schools

could do - or could have done - to help them when they are bereaved and how they perceive school life affects the process of grieving.

The current approach to the issue, although laudable, is piecemeal and I would recommend the establishment of an educational centre for resources and information on loss, death and bereavement to better co-ordinate such initiatives.

Such a centre could:

- provide teaching materials and resources for cross-curricular approaches to teaching and talking about death-related topics
- provide information for headteachers, teachers and other people involved in mainstream and special education of the likely general and specific effects of loss and bereavement on pupils
- compile a database of organisations, counselling groups, medical groups, charities and other self-help groups providing support, information and counselling for bereaved pupils and staff.

If more teaching material and resources were available I believe that discussing death within an educational context would enable pupils to understand facts and information about death not currently widespread in society and their feelings about their own death and the death of other people. They could become informed consumers of medical and funeral services and would be helped to clarify their own values on social and ethical issues (Clark, 1991). Although discussions of death often give rise to ontological questions, they need not be conducted mainly within RE - as is now the case - since to do so encourages pupils to see death as related to religious beliefs and practices, rather than as a natural life event. As well as producing teaching materials the centre could disseminate information concerning the thinking of children and young people at different ages about illness, dying and death and co-ordinate training and information between providers of such information (eg: researchers, writers and practitioners in universities, schools, social work agencies and charities) and those seeking it in educational institutions. Lists of appropriate publications and

audio and visual material could be compiled and regularly updated and the provision of such information for teachers (and, also, inevitably, for parents through schools) would enable a better understanding of the likely effects of loss and bereavement on the emotions, cognition and behaviour of children and young people, particularly as related to school life and study skills. Such a centre could also provide information about counselling support within education and about voluntary counselling organisations, self-help groups etc within each education authority area.

## **Summary**

Any future research must set the impact of a particular death in the context of life-long loss. By its very nature bereavement research always depends upon the willingness of some people to participate and its findings cannot unquestioningly be taken as representative of all bereaved people. Research on children and young people raises ethical questions that need clarifying, in particular whether schools are the best places in which to carry out such work. The bereavement experience of males seem to be under-represented in the literature and the many reasons for this need examining. Although the relative merits of both questionnaires and interviews can be debated, it is probably more important to find the best approach for each individual respondent. Researchers who wish to work in this field should be trained in counselling methods and experienced in talking to bereaved people. Although initiatives such as 'Winston's Wish' might provide a model for future support in schools, there is a real need for widespread initial teacher training, ongoing INSET, postgraduate study, research into pupil and staff opinions and experiences, and evaluation of school policies. In particular I would propose the establishment of an educational centre for resources and information on loss, death and bereavement to serve as a focus for the many activities that are currently underway.

## **Final reflection on the research**

In chapters two, three and seven I suggested certain forms of thinking, feeling and behaving which could indicate adaptation to bereavement in moral and spiritual terms, of which the following seem particularly pertinent in conclusion:

- Tolerating and/or bearing pain, disappointment, sorrow and loss and realizing that life can continue after such experiences.
- Recognizing, however briefly, one's own finitude and taking that into account in future life plans.
- Acquiring and/or formulating a philosophy of life for the present period of one's life and adapting and/or abandoning it at a later period.

I believe I have been able to identify such development in many of my respondents and hope that some of the ideas in this thesis may prove useful in interpreting responses to bereavement in ways that can be described as moral and spiritual.

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## **KOHLBERG'S SIX STAGES OF MORAL JUDGEMENT: FINAL VERSION**

Source: Kohlberg, L. & Ryncarz, R. A. (1990) 'Beyond justice reasoning: moral development and consideration of a seventh stage' In C. N. Alexander, S. M. Druker, E. J. Langer (eds) Higher Stages of Human Development  
Oxford: Oxford University Press

### **Level A: Preconventional level**

#### **Stage 1. The Stage of Punishment and Obedience**

##### ***Content***

Right is literal obedience to rules and authority, avoiding punishment, and not doing physical harm.

1. What is right is to avoid breaking rules, to obey for obedience's sake, and to avoid doing physical damage to people and property.
2. The reasons for doing right are avoidance of punishment and the superior power of authorities.

##### ***Social Perspective***

This stage takes an egocentric view. A person at this stage doesn't consider the interests of others or recognize they differ from actor's, and doesn't relate two points of view. Actions are judged in terms of physical consequences rather than in terms of psychological interests of others. Authority's perspective is confused with one's own.

#### **Stage 2. The Stage of Individual Instrumental Purpose and Exchange**

##### ***Content***

Right is serving one's own or other's needs and making fair deals in terms of concrete exchange.

1. What is right is following rules when it is to somebody's immediate interest. Right is acting to meet one's own interests and needs and letting others do the same. Right is also what is fair; that is, what is an equal exchange, a deal, an agreement.
2. The reason for doing right is to serve one's own needs or interests in a world where one must recognize that other people have their interests, too.

##### ***Social Perspective***

This stage takes a concrete individualistic perspective. A person at this stage separates own interests and points of view from those of authorities and others. He or she is aware that everybody has individual interests to pursue and these conflict, so that right is relative (in the concrete individualistic sense). The person integrates or relates conflicting individual interests to one another through instrumental exchange of services, through instrumental need for the other and the other's goodwill, or through fairness giving each person the same amount.

### **Level B: Conventional level**

#### **Stage 3. The Stage of Mutual Interpersonal Expectations, Relationships, and Conformity**

##### ***Content***

The right is playing a good/nice role, being concerned about other people and their feelings, keeping loyalty and trust with partners, and being motivated to follow rules and expectations.

1. What is right is living up to what is expected by people close to one or what people generally expect of people in one's role as son, sister, friend and so on. 'Being good' is important and means having good motives, showing concern about others. It also means keeping mutual relationships, maintaining trust, loyalty, respect and gratitude.

2. Reasons for doing right are needing to be good in one's own eyes and those of others, caring for others, and because if one puts oneself in the other person's place one would want good behaviour from the self (Golden Rule).

#### ***Social Perspective***

This stage takes the perspective of the individual in relationship to other individuals. A person at this stage is aware of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations, which take primacy over individual interests. The person relates points of view through the 'concrete Golden Rule,' putting oneself in the other person's shoes. He or she does not consider the generalized 'system' perspective.

### **Stage 4. The Stage of Social System and Conscience Maintenance**

#### ***Content***

The right is doing one's duty in society, upholding the social order, and maintaining the welfare of society or the group.

1. What is right is fulfilling the actual duties to which one has agreed. Laws are to be upheld except in extreme cases where they conflict with other fixed social duties and rights. Right is also contributing to society, the group or institution.

2. The reasons for doing right are to keep the institutions going as a whole, self respect or conscience as meeting one's defined obligations, or the consequences: 'What if everyone did it?'

#### ***Social Perspective***

This stage differentiates societal point of view from interpersonal agreement or motives. A person at this stage takes the viewpoint of the system, which defines roles and rules. He or she considers individual relations in terms of place in the system.

### **Level B/C transitional level**

This level is postconventional but not yet principled.

#### ***Contents of Transition***

At Stage 4.5, choice is personal and subjective. It is based on emotions, conscience is seen as arbitrary and relative, as are ideals such as 'duty' and 'morally right.'

#### ***Transitional Social Perspective***

At this stage, the perspective is that of an individual standing outside of her or his own society and considering her/himself as an individual making decisions without a generalized commitment or contract with society. One can pick and choose obligations, which are defined by particular societies, but one has no principles for such choice.

### **Level C: Postconventional and principled level**

Moral decisions are generated from right, values, or principles that are (or could be) agreeable to all individuals composing or creating a society designed to have fair and beneficial practices.

## **Stage 5. The Stage of Prior Rights and Social Contract or Utility**

### ***Content***

The right is upholding the basic rights, values, and legal contracts of a society, even when they conflict with the concrete rules and laws of the group.

1. What is right is being aware of the fact that people hold a variety of values and opinions, that most values and rules are relative to one's group. These 'relative' rules should usually be upheld, however, in the interest of impartiality and because they are the social contract. Some nonrelative values and rights such as life, and liberty, however, must be upheld in any society and regardless of majority opinion.

2. Reasons for doing right are, in general, feeling obligated to obey the law because one has made a social contract to make and abide by laws for the good of all and to protect their own rights and the rights of others. Family, friendship, trust, and work obligations are also commitments or contracts freely entered into and entail respect for the rights of others. One is concerned that laws and duties be based on rational calculation of overall utility: 'The greatest good for the greatest number.'

### ***Social Perspective***

This stage takes a prior-to-society perspective - that of a rational individual aware of values and rights prior to social attachments and contracts. The person integrates perspectives by formal mechanisms of agreement, contract, objective impartiality, and due process. He or she considers the moral point of view and the legal point of view, recognizes they conflict, and finds it difficult to integrate them.

## **Stage 6. The Stage of Universal Ethical Principles**

### ***Content***

This stage assumes guidance by universal ethical principles that all humanity should follow.

1. Regarding what is right, Stage 6 is guided by universal ethical principles. Particular laws or social agreements are usually valid because they rest on such principles. When laws violate these principles, one acts in accordance with the principle. Principles are universal principles of justice: the equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings as individuals. These are not merely values that are recognized, but are also principles used to generate particular decisions.

2. The reason for doing right is that, as a rational person, one has seen the validity of principles and has become committed to them.

### ***Social Perspective***

This stage takes the perspective of a moral point of view from which social arrangements derive or on which they are grounded. The perspective is that of any rational individual recognizing the nature of morality or the basic moral premise of respect for other persons as ends, not means.

## **CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN COLLECTION OF DATA**

### **March 1993**

Written request to headteacher of Fleur Secondary School for interview to discuss my research ideas.

Met member of staff from Maxwell Secondary School at PGDipEd/MEd seminar at University of Plymouth (Exmouth) who asked me to speak about death and bereavement as part of school's PSE programme.

### **April 1993**

Written refusal from senior management team member at Fleur Secondary School to discuss undertaking my research there.

### **May 1993**

Completion of ethics protocol which clarified issues relating to informed consent, protection from harm, confidentiality, right to withdraw, openness and honest, and debriefing (Appendix 3).

Questionnaire Pilot 1: 3 respondents (aged 52, 29 and 24) talked through their reactions to my questions. Two were BEd students (Barry and Camilla) who agreed to completing their questionnaires together and having their conversation taped.

Visited Hester Primary School with a colleague on school practice supervision.

### **June 1993**

Headteacher of Hester Primary School agreed to my request to work there in the following academic year.

### **July 1993**

Questionnaire Pilot 2: 14 respondents (aged 40-78) at 'Sea of Faith' conference completed questionnaire during workshop entitled 'Childhood bereavement and spiritual growth.'

### **August 1993**

'Sea of Faith' respondent Karen wrote further details of her experiences.

### **September 1993**

Met staff at Hester Primary School to explain my research and teacher of Year 5 volunteered to let me work with his class.

### **October-November 1993**

Questionnaire Pilot 2: 5 respondents (aged 32, 44, 51, 56 and 68) gave feedback on question content, wording and questionnaire layout as well as answering questions.

### **November-December 1993**

Letter sent to parents of pupils in Year 5 class at Hester Primary School (Appendix 6 i). Worked with 19 pupils on project located within RE entitled 'Remembering the Dead' every Wednesday morning for six weeks.

### **February 1994**

Letter to parents of pupils in one Year 10 class at Maxwell Secondary School (Appendix 6 ii). First PSE/RE lesson with this class in which we discussed bereavement experiences and funeral practices of major world religions.

Loaned books on bereavement to youth worker Fiona.

### **March 1994**

First PSE lesson with 79 pupils in whole of Year 7 at Maxwell Secondary School. Received 20 completed questionnaires (Appendix 4) from PGCE students aged 21-44 in final session of 4 week drama module after handing them out in previous session to anyone who was interested in answering.

### **June 1994**

Second PSE/RE lesson with one class of 17 Year 10 pupils at Maxwell Secondary School. Questionnaires completed regarding bereavement experiences.

**June-July 1994**

Letter to parents of pupils in Year 7 at Maxwell Secondary School (Appendix 6 iii).  
Second PSE lesson with 74 pupils (3 classes): discussion of bereavement experiences and completion of questionnaires (Appendix 5).

**August 1994**

Follow-up interview with PGCE student Wendy.

Winston Youth Club worker Fiona agreed to introduce me to several bereaved young people whom she knew.

**September 1994**

Follow-up interview with PGCE student Yoland.

'Sea of Faith' respondent Olga wrote further details of her experiences.

**October-December 1994**

3 interviews with Rita aged 16 at Winston Youth Club (Appendix 9).

**February 1995**

2 interviews with Sheila aged 16 at Winston Youth Club.

Letters to colleagues at University of Plymouth and personal requests to friends to interview their children.

**March 1995**

3 interviews with Thelma aged 16 at Winston Youth Club.

1 interview with Gemma aged 6.

**April 1995**

1 interview with each of the following: Marcus aged 6, Kirsty aged 8, Jason aged 10 and Giles aged 14.

2 interviews with Verity aged 17 at Winston Youth Club.

**June 1995**

1 interview with each of the following: Hazel aged 5, Ingrid aged 8, Melanie aged 12, Penelope aged 13, Timothy aged 13 and Rosemary aged 16.

**October 1995**

1 interview with Lionel aged 7.

**March 1996**

Letters to PGCE students Wendy and Yoland asking permission to use their material.

## **ETHICS PROTOCOL**

### **1. Informed consent**

When working with children aged 5-16 contacted through school, permission will be obtained from the headteacher in the first instance and then in writing from parents on behalf of their children. The children will be asked once more if they wish to participate before an interview starts or a questionnaire is handed out. When working with children aged 5-16 not contacted through school, where request for access has been directly made to the parents, or where the researcher is already known to the family, consent may be given orally.

When working with young people aged 16-18 contacted through school, permission will be obtained from the headteacher in the first instance. Thereafter participants will be deemed responsible for giving their own consent.

In all other cases, young people aged over 16 years not contacted through school, will be deemed responsible for giving their own consent.

### **2. Protection from harm**

Potential participants will be advised before participating in an interview or completing a questionnaire that memories and emotions (eg: sorrow, anger, regret) may quite naturally arise (Gray, 1986, p 358). Attention will be paid to the mood of participants during the work and, although not offering counselling as such to participants, the researcher will use her training and experience in bereavement counselling in order to give appropriate responses (BAC Code of Ethics and Practice for Counselling Skills, 1989).

In the case of research undertaken in schools and colleges, the relevant counselling service, pastoral tutor, form teacher, or people immediately responsible, or likely to be affected, will be informed beforehand.

The provisions of the Data Protection Act will be observed, as required.

### **3. Confidentiality**

Potential participants will be assured before answering any questions that:

(a) whatever information they give will not be shared with other people in such a way that they can be identified; (b) pseudonyms or no names at all will be used in transcribing, collating and writing up of the final document in order to ensure anonymity.

### **4. Right to withdraw**

All participants will be advised of their right to withdraw from all or some of the research at any time. This will be made clear when requesting consent and will be reiterated before an interview starts or a questionnaire is handed out. In the event of a school child withdrawing in emotional distress, provisions will have been made with school staff in advance (see 2. Protection from Harm).

### **5. Openness and honesty**

All potential respondents will be told that the researcher is interested in their ideas about: themselves (self concept), getting on with other people, making difficult decisions, 'God' or a divine power, death and spiritual/ religious matters.

In the case of research in schools, it is probable that a proportion of students in all groups questioned will have experienced a bereavement of some kind considered

by them to be major (Hufton, 1986, p 97). Although it will be important to remember and be sensitive to this, there is no need to select or avoid particular participants for inclusion as they may choose for themselves not to take part (see 1. Informed Consent and 4. Right to Withdraw). The purpose of the research is to compare experiences and opinions and this aim will not need to be disguised.

## **6. Debriefing**

All participants will be thanked for giving their time and answers. They will be reminded of the possibility of emotions and memories arising as a result of discussing losses in their lives and told that this is usual (See 2. Protection from Harm). Children and young people in school will be reminded of the staff who are available for them to talk to if needed; students aged over 16 and adults will be informed of the work of 'Cruse', 'The Compassionate Friends' etc. or similar appropriate groups.

Details of how to contact the researcher will also be supplied to participants in case of a wish to follow up any issue raised, even at a much later stage (Crompton, 1992, p 90). In the case of participants who are interviewed more than once, it will be made clear when the last session is to occur in order for adjustments to be made.

Asking "How do you feel now?" is an essential part of the debriefing process at the end of each interview and adequate time will be allowed for doing this. Questionnaires will also finish with this form of self-examination.

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VRC/10/93

## Appendix 4

### **FINAL VERSION OF QUESTIONNAIRE USED WITH ADULTS (PGCE STUDENTS)**

*I would like to confirm that whatever information you give me will be treated in complete confidence. I will not discuss what you tell me with other people in such a way that you can be identified and, if I want to make use of anything you have said in my work, I will ensure, by using pseudonyms, that you cannot be identified. Please feel free to choose which of the following questions to answer.*

Valerie Clark

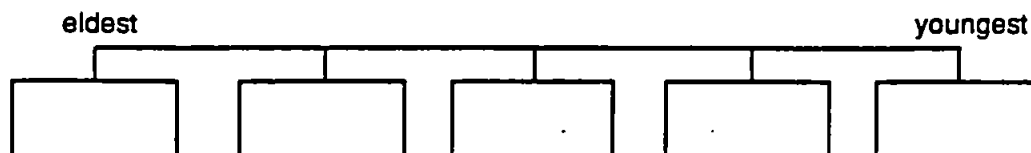
Where a Yes, No or Don't Know choice is given, please tick the appropriate box.

1. Please write in the boxes provided (a) today's date, (b) your age, (c) what your profession or employment is and (d) whether you are female or male (✓ box).

(a)  (b)  (c)  (d) F ☐ M ☐

2. Do you have any sisters or brothers? (a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

3. If Yes, draw your position among your sisters and brothers on the diagram below. Cross out or add spaces for people if you need to.



4. As a child were you brought up within any specific religious tradition  
(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

5. If Yes what was it ?

6. Do you belong to or fairly regularly attend any specific religious group now  
(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

7. If Yes what is it ?

8. Do you feel that you have had any "turning-points" in your life so far?  
(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

9. If yes, what were they and when?

10. How would you describe your present attitude to life?

11. What has led you to this attitude?
12. Which people are important to you in your life at this time?  
(Please give relationships rather than names.)
13. Apart from people, what else is important or of value to you in life at this time?
14. Please underline on this list anyone in your life who has died.

mother	father	sister	brother
wife	husband	daughter	son
Maternal grandmother	Maternal grandfather	Paternal grandmother	Paternal grandfather
aunt	uncle	cousin	niece
nephew	sister-in-law	brother-in-law	
stepmother	stepfather	stepsister	stepbrother
friend	neighbour	pet	
other elderly or step-, or half- or distant relation (explain who)			

15. Go back to the list in question 14 and write, at the right side of the name, how old you were at the time of the death.
16. Which death was most significant or important to you?
17. Please explain why it was significant or important if you can or would like to.

**If it is possible, please answer the questions that follow only in relation to a death that occurred in your life up to the time that you were 20 years old.**

18. Tick this box if you are able to do this. ☐  
(Please note that your responses are valuable whether or not you tick the box.)
19. Which death will you describe in the questions that follow?
20. What else was happening in your life at about that time?
21. Did you go to the funeral? (a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐ (c) Don't know or remember ☐
22. Did you want to go? (a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐ (c) Don't know or remember ☐
23. What explanations or beliefs did people give for why the death occurred?
24. Did your beliefs or understanding agree with what you were told?  
(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐ (c) Don't know or remember ☐
25. If No, how did they differ?
26. Did anyone try to comfort, assure or help you?  
(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐ (c) Don't know or remember ☐
27. If Yes, what did they tell you?
28. How did you feel at the time of the death?
29. How did you get on with your family after the death?  
(Please give a particular incident as an example if you can.)

30. How did you get on with people who were not family members after the death?  
(Again, please give a particular incident as an example if you can.)
31. Has this death changed your values or outlook on life in any way - either at the time, later on, or at the present time? (a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐ (c) Don't know or remember ☐
32. If Yes, how?
33. What do you think happens to us when we die?
34. Have you ever felt as though you were close to a spiritual force that seemed to lift you out of yourself, or to speak to you or help you in some way?  
(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐ (c) Don't know or remember ☐
35. If Yes, can you describe one of these experiences?

**Thank you for taking time to answer these questions. If there is anything I haven't asked you about, or that you would like to add, or if you would like to contribute further to this research, write your comments or your name and address below.**

**Please note that thinking about these issues may, for a time, affect how you feel.**

## Appendix 5

### **FINAL VERSION OF QUESTIONNAIRE USED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE (YEAR 7 AT MAXWELL SECONDARY SCHOOL)**

*I would like to confirm that whatever information you give me will be treated in complete confidence. I will not discuss what you tell me with other people in such a way that you can be identified and, if I want to make use of anything you have said in my work, I will use another name to describe you. You can choose which of the following questions to answer.*

*Valerie Clark*

Where a Yes or No reply is given, please circle your answer.

1. Write in the boxes provided today's date, your age and whether you are female or male.

date

age

f/m

2. Do you have any sisters or brothers? Yes

No

3. If yes, how many sisters do you have?

How many brothers?

4. Do you live with both your parents?

Yes

No

5. If no, please explain who you live with.

6. Have you been brought up in a particular religious tradition? (eg: Church of England, Jewish, Catholic etc)

Yes

No

7. If yes, what was it?

8. Do you belong to or fairly regularly attend any particular religious group now?

Yes

No

9. If yes, what is it?

10. What has been the most important thing that has happened to you in your life so far? (It may have been good, sad, frightening, unusual etc)

11. Which people are important to you in your life? (Please give relationships rather than names.)

12. Apart from people, what else is important to you or of value to you at this time in your life?

13. Have you ever taken part in any charity event? Yes No

14. If yes, please explain what you did. (eg: walking, swimming, fasting etc)

15. Is there anything happening in the world that you read or hear about or see on television that (a) upsets or annoys you?

Yes

No

(b) makes you want to stop it?

Yes

No

(c) pleases you?

Yes

No

(d) makes you want to do the same?

Yes

No

16. If yes, please explain what it is.

17. Please underline on this list anyone in your life who has died.

mother	father	sister	brother
grandmother (you mother's mother)		grandmother (your father's mother)	
grandfather (your mother's father)		grandfather (your father's father)	
aunt	uncle	cousin	
neice	nephew	sister-in-law	brother-in-law
stepmother	stepfather	stepsister	stepbrother
friend	neighbour	pet	
other elderly, or step-, or half- or distant relation (explain who)			

18. Go back to the list in question 17 and write, at the right side of the name, how old you were at the time of the death.

19. Which death was most important or significant to you?

20. If you can or would like to, please explain why it was significant or important.

21. What else was happening in your life at about the time of that death?

22. Did you go to the funeral? Yes No Don't remember/know

23. Did you want to go? Yes No Don't remember/know

24. What explanations or beliefs did people give for why the death happened?

25. Did anyone try to comfort or help you? Yes No Don't remember/know

26. If yes, what did they do or tell you?

27. How did you feel, or what did you think, at the time of the death?

28. How do you feel, or what do you think, about it now?

29. How did you get on with your family after the death? (Can you remember any particular incident as an example?)

30. How did you get on with people who were not members of the family after the death? (Again, can you remember any particular incident as an example?)

31. Did the death make you think differently about the things that are important to you or the way you look at life? (This change might have been at the time of the death, later on, or now.)

Yes    No

32. If yes, how?

33. Did the death make you change your behaviour or personality in any way, even if only for a short time? (eg: After the death did you [or do you now] behave differently, or treat certain other people differently?)

Yes    No

34. If yes, please explain what the change was/is.

35. Did the death make any difference to your creative or sporting interests, or to your hobbies or interests in any way, even if only for a short time? (eg: After the death did you start? [or stop] painting, drawing, making things, writing or doing sport or anything like that?)

Yes    No

36. If yes, please explain what the change was/is.

37. What do you think happens to us when we die?

Please put a tick after only ONE of the answers in questions 38 and 39.

38. I think that God or a divine power

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| (a) Exists and takes care of us.                  | (c) May exist but I'm not sure. |
| (b) Exists but does not affect our everyday life. | (d) Doesn't exist.              |

39. Have you at times felt that God or a divine power is close to you?

- |                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| (a) Very often.  | (c) Perhaps, but I'm not sure. |
| (b) A few times. | (d) No.                        |

In question 40 please tick AS MANY of the answers as you think is likely:

40. On which of these occasions might people wish that God or a divine power could be near to them?

- (a) When they are feeling sad or upset.
- (b) When they feel lonely.
- (c) When they are helpful to someone.
- (d) At night.
- (e) When they are ill.
- (f) When they are in a quiet, deserted place.
- (g) When they feel happy.
- (h) When they need to choose the right thing to do.
- (i) When they feel frightened.
- (j) When they are in a test or an exam.
- (k) After someone they know has died.
- (l) When they are in trouble for doing or saying something.
- (m) When they are kind to someone.
- (n) When they are praying.
- (o) When they are on their own.
- (p) When they say they are sorry for doing something wrong.
- (q) While someone they know is dying.
- (r) When they are at a church service.
- (s) When they are in danger.
- (t) When they work hard.
- (u) Any other occasion you can think of? (Say when it could be)

*Thank you for taking time to answer these questions. If you would like to help me further in my work (by talking to me more about your experiences) please write your name in the space below, or if there is anything I haven't asked you about, or anything else you want to say, please use the space below for your comments.*

*How do you feel now after thinking about these issues?*

**LETTER TO PARENTS OF YEAR 5 PUPILS AT  
HESTER PRIMARY SCHOOL**

1st November 1993

Dear Parent,

Ms Donald has given me permission to write to you about the work I will be undertaking at Hester School for six weeks in November and December. I am a teacher of English and Drama, currently working at Rolle Faculty of Education (University of Plymouth) for a Doctor of Philosophy degree exploring children's spiritual and moral thinking about death. During the next two years I will be building up an overall picture of children's ideas about these topics as a result of working in several Devon schools and I am writing to explain what will be involved in the work with your child.

I would like to find out what children think about themselves as individuals, as members of a local community, and of the wider world, about God (or whatever power or force they think exists), about death and how we react to it, and about their understanding of spiritual or religious ideas. I am aware, because I am also a bereavement counsellor, that most of us - including children - have lost someone or something of importance, and I will be sensitive to this reaction as much as possible in my work.

The project will include talking, reading, drawing and writing. We will use stories, poems and pictures about the different ways of celebrating and remembering the dead in Japan, Mexico and Britain, and discuss our ideas of God and gods, and what we think happens after death. I would also like to tape record some discussions, usually in small groups. All these activities are based upon Religious Education guidelines for Key Stage 2 and are planned to co-ordinate with any other work being done by Mr Lewis in this basic curriculum area.

I would like your permission to make use of what is said, drawn or written in my project. Your child's name will not be used in my final write-up and, if I want to make use of any individual contribution, I will make sure that identification is not possible. Furthermore, your child can opt out, if that seems best for whatever reason, even at a later stage. I do hope, however, that your child will be able to contribute to this project and that your permission will be given because it is only by asking children directly about such issues that we can understand more about them and improve our education and care of them.

Yours faithfully,

Valerie Clark, Ms

.....

Project on spiritual and moral development

*\* Please delete as appropriate.*

Child's name.....

I \*do / \*do not give my permission for my child's work to be used in the project.

Signed.....

**LETTER TO PARENTS OF YEAR 10 PUPILS AT  
MAXWELL SECONDARY SCHOOL**

9th February 1994

Dear Parent,

I am writing to let you know that I have been invited to contribute to the Personal and Social Education programme for Year 10 by talking about death and bereavement and that my first session will be tomorrow, Thursday 10th February. I am a teacher of English and Drama, currently working at Rolle School of Education (University of Plymouth) for a Doctor of Philosophy degree exploring young people's spiritual and moral thinking about death, and I have also worked as a bereavement counsellor for 'Cruse.' In addition to sharing information with young people, I am also interested in building up a picture of their own ideas about these matters and I am undertaking similar work in other Devon schools.

As arranged with the programme co-ordinator, I shall discuss bereavement reactions and the many ways in which different cultural and religious traditions, including Christianity, mark the event of death. I should like your permission to make use of any material that arises in the sessions for my project: your child's name will not be used; I will make sure that individual identification is not possible, and your child can opt out, if that seem best for whatever reason, even at a later stage. If you do not wish your child's work to be included in the project please complete the slip below. I can be contacted through the school or on 0395 255342 .

Yours faithfully,

Valerie Clark, Ms

.....

Project on spiritual and moral thinking

Child's name.....

I do not give my permission for my child's work to be used in the project.

Signed.....

**LETTER TO PARENTS OF YEAR 7 PUPILS AT  
MAXWELL SECONDARY SCHOOL**

23rd June 1994

Dear Parent,

I am writing to let you know that, during the week beginning 27th June 1994, I shall be conducting a follow up to the session held on 23rd March, in which I talked to Year 7 about death and bereavement. This is part of the Personal and Social Education programme to which I was invited to contribute. I am a teacher of English and Drama, currently working at Rolle School of Education (University of Plymouth) for a Doctor of Philosophy degree exploring young people's spiritual and moral thinking about death, and I have also worked as a bereavement counsellor for 'Cruse.' In addition to sharing information with young people - as I did in the first session - I am also interested in building up a picture of their own ideas and experiences about these matters which is one of my reasons for the second visit. Please feel free to contact the school office or my own office (0395 255343/2) if you have any enquiries about this work.

Yours faithfully,

Valerie Clark, Ms

**QUESTIONS USED IN SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH SHEILA  
(AS EXAMPLE OF THOSE ALSO USED WITH RITA, THELMA AND VERITY)**

Before interview: remind her that after we have spoken together she may experience emotional reactions and have some memories rekindled; I will observe confidentiality; she can withdraw from conversation or not answer; I will give her a transcript of our conversation the next time I see her or send it via Fiona; I may wish to speak to her more than once if she agrees.

1. What is your age now? When is your birthday?
2. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
3. Whose death will you tell me about?
4. How old were you when the death happened?
5. What time of the year was it when it happened?
6. Tell me about how you heard about the death.
7. Did you go to the funeral?
8. How did you get on with your father afterwards?
- [9. How did you get on with your siblings afterwards?]
10. Were you given any explanation for the death - in medical or even religious terms by anyone?
11. What sense have you made of the death? Have you found a meaning for it?
12. Do you think there is any kind of a meaning to life?
13. Have you ever thought about what has happened to your mother? In other words, where is she now?
14. What was your idea or experience of death before your mother died?
15. How has your thinking about the death changed since it happened- if at all?
16. Have your thoughts about death itself (its purpose or meaning) changed since your mother's death?
17. What has been the most important experience for you in your life so far?
18. Have you experienced the death of any other important people or animals in your life?
19. Do these deaths seem timely or untimely - OK or not OK to you?
20. What are the most important things in life for you right now?
21. What things or people do you value in life?
22. Have you been brought up in any particular religious tradition?
23. Has this tradition (or lack of it) affected your thinking about your mother's death or about death itself at all?
24. Do you have any beliefs or ideas about God or a Divine Spirit?
25. What do you think is the purpose of human life?
26. Do you have any beliefs or thoughts about why some people suffer more than others in the world or die earlier?
27. When life gets difficult for you, what keeps you going?
28. How do you make important decisions in life?
29. Did your mother's death make you change your behaviour or personality in any way - even if only for a short time?

30. Did your mother's death make any difference to your creative or sporting interests, or to your hobbies or interests in any way - even if only for a short time? Did you start doing anything new or stop doing anything that you had always done up until then?
31. What are your career plans? What kind of a future life do you want to have?
32. What do you like doing in your spare time?

At end of interview: How do you feel? You may have some more reactions (sorrow, memories) to what we have talked about later. Thank you for answering my questions. I will bring/ send a copy of what we talked about for you to keep [next week].

**RESPONDENTS MENTIONED IN CHAPTER 7:  
AGE AND SOURCE OF CONTACT**

Aileen: aged 15, Maxwell School, Year 10  
Barbara: aged 22, PGCE student  
Barry: aged 29, Pilot 1: BEd student  
Beryl: aged 15, Maxwell School, Year 10  
Candida: aged 39, PGCE student  
Camilla: aged 24, Pilot 1: BEd student  
Edith: aged 40, PGCE student  
Charles: aged 15, Maxwell School, Year 10  
Gail: aged 30, PGCE student  
Gavin: aged 52, 'Sea of Faith' conference delegate  
Hannah: aged 21, PGCE student  
Henry: aged 58, 'Sea of Faith' conference delegate  
Ian: aged 63, 'Sea of Faith' conference delegate  
Imogen: aged 24, PGCE student  
Jasmine: aged 26, PGCE student  
Jennifer: aged 10, daughter of colleague/friend  
Karen: aged 40, 'Sea of Faith' conference delegate  
Keith: aged 30, PGCE student  
Lionel: aged 7, son of colleague/friend  
Lorraine: aged 42, 'Sea of Faith' conference delegate  
Malcolm: aged 29, PGCE student  
Melanie: aged 12, daughter of colleague/friend  
Nancy: aged 64, 'Sea of Faith' conference delegate  
Olga: aged 78, 'Sea of Faith' conference delegate  
Orlando: aged 21, PGCE student  
Pansy: aged 25, PGCE student  
Patrick: aged 68, Pilot 2  
Primrose: aged 11, Maxwell School, Year 7  
Rita: aged 16, Winston Youth Club  
Rosemary: aged 16, daughter of colleague/friend  
Sandra: aged 44, Pilot 2  
Sheila: aged 16, Winston Youth Club  
Tabitha: aged 51, Pilot 2  
Thelma: aged 16, Winston Youth Club  
Timothy: aged 13, son of colleague/friend  
Ursula: aged 56, Pilot 2  
Verity: aged 17, Winston Youth Club  
Wendy: aged 22, PGCE student  
Yoland: aged 23, PGCE student

**INTERVIEW WITH RITA AT WINSTON YOUTH CLUB ON 16th November 1994  
(AS EXAMPLE)**

[.....] indicates speech was unclear

V: Last week when I spoke with you and we were talking in Fiona's about - the dog - I wasn't sure - and I thought about it afterwards - was the dog connected with your father's death?

R: Yes, it was.

V: I hadn't realized that.

R: Did you guess?

V: Ah, Fiona had told me that one of the people she was going to introduce me to had had somebody die because they were rescuing an animal, a dog, and when I went home I put two and two together - but I didn't at the time - and I'm sorry I didn't..

R: That's OK

V: Because it's sort of... OK. Tell me about it.

R: Do you want me to tell you about both my deaths? I've had two.

V: Oh, tell me about your father first of all.

R: Well, my father died secondly when I was eight um - I can't remember that much about it, um, I was at school at the time when it happened and, um, I just remember the teacher coming in and just taking me out of the classroom and telling me. One of my Mum's friends took me home and they just - they just explained that my father was out with my grandma - they were just walking the dog, um, one afternoon and, um, the dog got loose...

V: Yeah.

R: And of course it went on the train track, so my father tried to go after it and of course he didn't make it, and a train came along, so - he got caught under it. But that's, I mean, that's all I know as far as my Mum told me.... It was quite a long time ago actually.

V: 8 years.

R: Mmmm

V: 8 years? What time of year?

R: Um, I can't quite remember - maybe autumn I think, mmm, yeah -

V: I was just wondering -

R: November!

V: About now, then?

R: Yes.

V: I wondered if you - realized that it might be an anniversary about now?

R: Yeah. I can normally tell by my Mum [.....] - she gets a bit upset.

V: Mmm, mmm.

R: Um. Yeah, I think it was in November time.

V: So he was out with his mother - as it were, your grandmother - walking the dog, the dog got loose and he ran onto the track or tried to get the dog free and was killed.

R: Yes.

V: And you were told at school.

R: Yeah, I was taken out of the class and told.

V: Tell me what happened next, as far as you remember.

R: Um. I remember being taken home and - my Mum was there. Um - I don't really remember much after that it. She just sort of tried to sit down and talk to me about it but I suppose I didn't take it in at first because I was quite young.

V: Mmm.

R: But I knew as soon as I was taken out of the classroom I knew what had happened - just like the first time when I knew what had happened.

V: The first time being?

R: The first time when my brother died.

V: Ah! No, I didn't know about that either. Can we pause for a moment while I check the volume?

R: Sure.

(Pause for volume check)

V: Your brother?

R: Yeah. Do you want me to tell you about that?

V: Please.

R: Um it happened when I was 6.

V: Mmm.

R: And - my Dad and my brother used to - used to have a tandem and they used to go, um, cycling, they used to go in races and things like that. And, um, I think I was home off school one day sick, I think it was in the week. I'm sure it was. I was there with my Mum, and it was getting a bit late and we were worried about them.

V: Umm.

R: I think my Mum knew there was something up. And then the doorbell rang, and then - I don't know but somehow I knew something was wrong - and it was a policeman, the police at the door and I didn't hear what had happened - I didn't hear what they said to my Mum, because they didn't come in. Um, and she just came in and she just looked so shocked and she - you know - it was really hard for me to understand. It didn't sink it at all at first.

V: Mmm.

R: And she - I don't think - she did try and tell me but as I was so young it was really hard for her to try and get it through to me. Um, and my Dad was in the accident as well, um, it was, um, I think they were on the road and I think it was, um, a lorry. I think somehow they collided.

V: Mmm.

R: And my Dad - just - he survived that with a broken leg.

V: Mmm.

R: But my brother, he was on the back I think, and he must just have gone over or something.

V: How old was your brother?

R: He was 8 at the time.

V: So he was - two years older than you.

R: Yes.

V: Mmm! What sense did you make of it - if sense is the right word - what, what ...?

R: Um

V: Did you - begin to think why has this happened or ...?

R: I didn't think about that at the time. At the time it just, you know - I don't know it just didn't seem real.

V: Mmm.

R: It took *ages* to sink in and...

V: That's for your brother whose name is..?

R: Walter.

V: Walter.

R: And um, I don't know, it just - I just sort of - was a bit shocked for a while - and then - I suppose I - it didn't really sink in - so I didn't really understand what - had happened - only that they were gone, that he was gone - um, and I don't think it was until later that I started saying oh [God] why has it got to happen to our family and all this.

V: Mmm.

R: Cos my Mum was, she, she was quite strong - but I think she was strong for me -

V: Umm.

R: Because we, you know, we had quite a big house and she seemed to be putting on a brave face - but it wasn't until later that I thought, you know, why has this happened. It didn't actually sink in and I didn't realize.

V: Did it change your life having lost your brother when you were 6, in terms of your childhood, your friends and the way you got on with other people, do you suppose?

R: Um, yeah I think it did. In a big way. Cos every now and again now I look back and think, you know: "Oh, I wish my brother was here."

V: Mmm.

R: We were pretty - we were very close actually - and I can't remember much of him but, when you look at the photos I think, well, we must have been really close. Um, I don't know, it's just... strange.

V: Some people if they lose a brother or a sister talk about losing a real companion or a friend or someone they played games with or just having a sense of someone else of the same age in the family. I mean there are all those possibilities, even if it's a brother, you know in your case, not the same sex...

R: Yeah.

V: Um, he was older so therefore he might have introduced you to other people, all sorts of things that - didn't happen because he - he died.

R: Mmm.

V: Or things that you thought were going to happen and then stopped because he was no longer around.

R: Yeah. I always remember hanging ... um playing with his friends, his friends that used to live up the road, and they used to come down and play on my computer, and I used to love that, cos his friends used to show me how to get into this, how to get out of this maze that I'd been trying to work out for ages!

V: Hahaha!

R: I was really chuffed about that. Yeah, he did sort of, he was, we were close - so - but I think it has made a difference to my life - definitely...

V: I'm going to ask you this kind of question several times...

R: OK.

V: In what kind of way?

R: Um...

V: It's a hard question I realize.

R: Yeah. Um, well, now...

V: Mmm?

R: I feel - sometimes I feel very lonely - especially being an only child now - and, um I guess, well it's changed my life because my Mum has got closer to me -

V: Mmm

R: And - I don't know, it's hard to say, really. I know it has changed but in what way it's really hard to say. Um ... I'll have to think about that one!

V: Yes, that's fair enough. Um, it's certainly true that - er, in cases where a brother or a sister dies and there is one child left, the parent or parents often become - much closer to the child that survives - um - which is good. But also sometimes, can be *more* close than either of them actually want.

R: Yeah.

V: But there's a kind of a sense of: you're all I've got now for the moment. Now maybe that happened after Walter died, but maybe it happened more after Dad died.

R: Yeah.

V: I'm guessing, because that was the original family unit...

R: Yeah. I remember when - me and my Mum used to live together, quite - after my Dad died, I remember when, that's when we became really close.

V: Mmm.

R: Because when my brother died, my Mum had my father to lean on.

V: Yes of course.

R: But I think that she was - we were leaning on each other then.

V: So, two years later when you were 8 - only 8, that's still quite young - your Dad died and your Mum then - you said about Walter how you felt she was strong for you, how was it different for her after her husband died - therefore how was it different between you and her?

R: Um. Well she felt very alone too - I mean she had friends but - she felt very - out of it, you know. I think, it took her a long time to get over it, especially after Walter died and then - Dad died. It's all sort of - 2 years isn't all that long really when you think about it - so, I suppose, but - I don't know - but we did become closer definitely and even *now* we're very close. I tell her almost everything, so I suppose that's how - we've become closer.

V: And you could almost say, perhaps, that's a very good thing that's come out of it, you have found a friend in your Mum. That was a knock on the door.

R: Yes, it was, wasn't it?

V: I think we'll have to stop, then.

(Pause to investigate noise at door)

V: We were talking about your Mum then. Um, let's, let's just... if you don't mind, go back to... Did you go to Walter's funeral?

R: Yes I'm [sure] I did.

V Do you remember anything about it? You just said "I'm sure I did" so you don't remember very much about it.

R: No, I don't, no, not at all. Um. I'm sure I went. I can't remember much about it, I just remember the coffin going in - the grave.

V So he was buried?

R: Yeah.

V So his - grave is somewhere in Winston?

R: Yeah, it's up the top - of New Street, Church Hill, because we used to live at... Church Hill and the church is just at the top of the hill from where they're buried. And it's funny actually because my friend, um, she had a - her Mum had a baby and it died, I think, a few hours afterwards - this is my *best* friend -

V: Yes.

R: And, it's so funny - well, not funny at all but - um, she was, her - sister was buried next to my brother.

V: Um.

R: And - I don't know, somehow that made us really close as well. Because - but - er I don't suppose she suffered much because she didn't actually know her sister...

V: Mmm.

R: But she still - we always used to go up there together and have a little cry about it.

V: "We both have somebody dead here in the ground together side by side." The timing of some events suddenly seems important about deaths.

R: Yeah.

V: How about Dad's funeral? Do you remember much about that?

R: Um, yeah, I remember that actually quite clearly. Cos I remember sitting in the church and I was crying my eyes out and my Mum just handed me a hankie.

V: Mmm.

R: And I remember ... walking up - towards the grave behind, you know, the coffin, we all walked behind it - and I just remember, I remember the ceremony and everything. I remember my Mum sitting next to me holding my hand ...

V: How did you feel about anything that was said in the ceremony? Did you make sense of it at all or did you think "I don't believe that" or "That's an interesting idea"? Because at funeral services people tell you, give you, some religious theories, don't they - or do they?

R: Um, I can't remember *much* - I don't - I think it was still quite blurry then.

V: Mmm.

R: Because I was still trying to, you know, it was still trying to sink in - um, I remember them talking about how good he was, you know, as a father and how - I think he was, he did quite a lot for charity so...

V: Mmm.

R: I think that's all. I remember those bits

V: What kind of account, what kind of reason, did people give for your father's death - and even for Walter's death?

R: Um, I don't think they really - tried to make a reason, they just said, you know, it was one of those things. It was an accident.

V: In both cases, it was an accident.

R: Yeah.

V: Mmm.

R: I don't think anyone tried to put any - anything, you know, pinpoint anything. They just said, you know, it was just an accident.

V: An accident - or death by, you know, an accident that causes death - you can well argue is untimely in life. It comes at the wrong time.

R: Yeah.

V: Quite clearly we wouldn't expect Walter to die when he was so young, nor your Dad either. Do you have any thoughts about timely or untimely deaths? You've had two of them.

R: Um. I suppose - everyone's got to go when they're called, really!

V: I'm interested in your "when they're called" idea.

R: Yeah.

V: If that's possible for you to...

R: Um.

V: Is there "a calling"? Or is that a phrase that you just used?

R: I think that - I do believe in God.

V: Uhum.

R: I used to go to church. I still believe and I am a Christian.

V: Uhum.

R: And - I just believe that - when - if you're not meant to be here then - you're going to be taken away - but I don't think that *they* should have been [taken].

V: Mmm.

R: So...

V: I'm interested in this kind of thinking as well that young people may need to go through, especially you. You went through two fairly - very significant - losses - and I'm wondering what kind of impact that had on a faith - or, not, as the case may be. Some people might say "Well, I can't believe in a God who does this to me" but it seems that you're not saying that. You're saying, "Well, it - I have a faith and this slots into it in some way".

R: Yeah. I don't, I don't *understand* why it happened...

V: Mmm

R: ... When it did - but - um, sometimes it's hard to know what I think, because of what's happened... I'm just...

V: May I ask another question?

R: Yeah, sure.

V: I hope I'm not interrupting your train of thought there but it might help to get you tracking again! You might not know now - You may not know now - How old are you, 16?

R: Yeah.

V: Right. When's your birthday?

R: April.

V: Right. So, yeah, 16 and a half almost... You might at this stage in your life say, well I don't know now, um, or what I now think is different from how it was when I was 10 or even 8. So really my next sort of thinking is: can you see that you've had different ideas about where it fits in to your [...] faith at different times in the past? Or has it always been rather blurry, but that perhaps there were times when it made a bit more sense but now it makes a bit less sense...?

R: Um. I didn't really know much about God to start off with when I was young - um especially - maybe that's why my Mum, um, got involved in it maybe - she started going to church. We used to go every week - but - it was really blurry to start off with - and then, as I say, at times I thought I had, you know - I thought, "Well, maybe it's just God saying - you know, that they should be with him". And then - other times I just think: "Well, why did he do this thing really?" I don't know.

V: Mmm.

R: I don't understand why he would have taken away these two people from me and my Mum -

V: Mmm.

R: And then it's just - I go through phases - I've tried reading books about it.

V: Uhum.

R: About - I've read a couple of books about bereavement. They've been quite helpful. I read one about, um - the stages that you go through before death and about going through the tunnel and - they've been quite helpful, but I don't - I *do* believe that there is a light and they say that your whole - your spirit comes out of your body and you can see where you are and that you can see where you are and what's happened to you - and then you just go down this dark tunnel. I believe that. But, um, sometimes I just think, you know, why has this happened?

V: Yes. The 'why' can never be answered, as you're realizing.

R: That's right.

V: Do you ever have any thoughts - I know after my mother died I was - by the way, I've got a cold too, hence, here if you need to, go for it - (indicating tissues)

R: Haha!

V: When my mother died, having only a couple of days before visited her in hospital, and then we cremated her - which perhaps is another way of losing somebody - at least you know where your relatives are - cremation is another interesting possibility - I really needed to locate her and I, you know, I talked to her, wherever she could be. I'm wondering if you've had any sense of trying to locate this person - your brother or perhaps your Dad - and whether you still do. Where do you think they are?

R: I don't know really. Cos I - er - I used to, well, when I was not that old - used to up to them and talk to them at the grave.

V: Yes, I still talk to the rose bush where my mother's ashes are!

R: Yes. And I - I write letters to my Dad - still, every now and again, when there's something really bothering me. Um, I don't - I think I'm going to - that when I die I know that I will go and be with them, I will go up wherever heaven is - if there is one. I will go up - with them and meet my Grandmother who's also died now. Um. And then we'll be together again.

V: I don't have the answers either...

R: Haha!

V: So I appreciate you trying to give me some of your formulations on it. Where is it that they are? Are they in another dimension or another place? Do you understand the difference here - is it simply - beyond where we can see or is

there another kind of perspective? In a sense is he here now except that we can't see him? Not physically, I mean.

R: Yeah.

V: But in some kind of essence - I hesitate to use the word 'spirit'.

R: Mmm.

V: Have you ever thought about - and I'm not trying to couch it particularly in spiritualistic terms either -

R: Yeah.

V: But merely - do you have a sense of their presence with you, ever at all?

R: Sometimes I do. Every now and again. I suppose when I - when I need them I suppose I do.

V: Um, and what kind of times might that be?

R: Um, maybe when I'm upset about something, whatever it may be... [not that I really have any arguments with my Mum at all.] Um, sometimes I think maybe they *are* round us, spiritually.

V: Uhum.

R: But - and I sometimes think that I sense it but I don't really know for definite. I don't, I don't really know whether they're - around us spiritually or - whether they're somewhere completely different where we can't sense them or - I guess that's just something we have to find out.

V: And probably won't find out in this life for ourselves, anyway.

R: Yeah.

V: It's really possibly only what we make of how we feel. And if, as you say, sometimes when you really need them you feel that they are there - both Walter and Dad, or just Dad more than Walter?

R: Um, I don't know - maybe Dad more than Walter. Most of the time it is. I don't.... I guess it's because, maybe, I knew my Dad a bit more.

V: Mmm.

R: My brother, I can't remember much about Walter.

V: Mmm.

R: I just remember the holidays we used to go on.

V: Haha!

R: I just remember walking for days in the country. [...] I remember those. But I don't remember much else - about *him*. So - maybe that's why I sense him, my father, more than Walter.

V: Yeah, that makes some sense.

R: Because it's stronger.

V: Yes, the memory is stronger. Hum. Um, yes! I'm intrigued. Your Dad saved the dog. Did the dog survive?

R: [...]

V: So what did you do with the dog? Was that just a blur as well? You don't remember...

R: I don't remember anything about the dog. I don't remember it ever being mentioned afterwards.

V: Mmm.

R: Maybe it was just like - not being horrible but, you know - [...]

V: In the light of your father's death, the dog's death was very minor.

R: Yes.

V: And were you saying last week that you've not had animals since or that you have?

R: Um, had a cat since.

V: But not a dog.

R: No. Maybe that's because of - whether - the surroundings or just pure inconvenience or whether - I don't think I could ever have a dog the same, same type - because it was a cocker spaniel.

V: Mmm.

R: And I don't think I could ever have one again.

V: Maybe both you and your Mum - Mum more than you, maybe - are making firm gestures against 'a dog' because of the reminder, whereas a cat's a different animal and doesn't have that kind of memory association.

R: Yeah. I don't - we were talking about getting a dog but we weren't talking about getting - we were getting - we were talking about getting a highland terrier.

V: Mmm.

R: But not a cocker spaniel?

V: No.

R: No way would we ever get one of those I don't think.

V: Have you said that to each other or do you just know that you wouldn't?

R: We both know. Definitely. I don't really talk to her about it any more - only when I'm really - I'm quite upset about it or something. We used to talk about it quite a lot but - now - we just - don't seem to.

V: Does - has the need gone to talk that frequently, perhaps?

R: Um, I don't - yeah, I suppose maybe that is, or maybe it's just now I'm grown up it seems harder to talk to her

V: Mmm.

R: Because I'm beginning to understand things a bit better. Maybe that's why. [.....]

V: You said: "I understand things a bit more". Do you - do you feel you can share with me what you mean there?

R: Well I just mean - because it's not so blurry now as when I was little - because I didn't really take in what had happened.

V: Mmm.

R: Like oh, they've gone but I don't know where.

V: Mmm.

R: I don't understand - I don't understand things a *lot* clearer now but maybe they are a little clearer, in the sense that - I've now got a wider experience -

V: Mmm.

R: As in - other beliefs - or, you know, other theories.

V: Right.

R: Whereas then I didn't know anything about, anything about death, hardly anything. So...

V: So I think you're also saying: "I know a lot more about life, I'm older, I've met more people. You know, it's called growing up. But also, then - when my brother and my Dad died - they were possibly your first experience of death, certainly your first experience of death close up - which you've had - you've got a clearer or an improved perspective on - other deaths, now."

R: Yes.

V: So - talk me through how your thinking about death itself has progressed since, say, when were 6 until now you're 16.

R: Um...

V: And they've obligingly turned the music off for you (outside). Oh, no, they haven't!

R: Haha! Um, well now I think, now I suppose - maybe reading those books got me thinking a bit.

V: Mmm.

R: That one about - um it was just about [ordinary] stages - I don't know what it was called - and, that got me thinking. I didn't actually read the whole book but I read most of it. About - it was just an account of people's - um - experiences.

V: As they died?

R: Or near death experiences.

V: Oh, near death experiences, yes.

R: And some of them had got further than the others before they were drawn back again - I think that's made me - realize a lot - about about - about death. Because I didn't, I knew that, I knew that - I don't know, maybe from about 13 onwards - I

knew that, you know, you were drawn along a tunnel but I just, I didn't know how I knew, but, it was just something that I believed in.

V: Mmm

R: So I think that, that has changed my views. I don't - I just think that you go - somewhere - and maybe you can come down and just - be sensed by other people that are very close to you. And then, maybe that's only when you're needed - when they're needed - then they come down. But I mean when I was little I didn't think about anything like that, I just thought "Well, they're dead, they're gone, they're in the ground, and they're rotting away". But, I think ... cos - a quite - well, with my best friend's sister dying and, um, I talked to quite a few other people about - they've had - quite a few - well not a few, perhaps one death in their family - [I've talked to them about it] .... and my Grandma, as well.

V: Um, that's your Dad's mother.

R: The one that was with my Dad.

V: Yes.

R: She died about - not that long ago actually - about four months ago.

V: Oh, right. I didn't realise you'd had such a very recent bereavement.

R: But the thing was - it was funny because - after - my Dad's death we didn't - we used to go and visit my Grandma, she lives, she lived in Eastown -

V: Uhum.

R: And um, I don't know, we just grew apart, really quickly - and I felt really guilty when she died because I hadn't been to see her. Um. I didn't feel like I had the right to cry at the funeral.

V: Because you felt you hadn't been close enough to her to cry?

R: Yes. Ah!

V: But she'd been your Gran and she'd been part of your family, hadn't she?

R: Yeah. [I think my Mum felt that too] because she - because I had to - because I was her only real grandchild - so, um, I had to go at the front with her stepgrandchildren who - who went to see her all the time and I just - felt so bad about it. I didn't feel that I had the right to go - at the front of that... [.....]

V: When did you last see her?

R: Um, about a year ago. So...

V: Did you go with your Mum to see her?

R: Yes.

V: Or did you ever go on your own?

R: No. I went with her because I couldn't get there otherwise.

V: Well, I was thinking there that it wasn't just you that - didn't go to see her. Your Mum and you, perhaps, between you, didn't go to see her quite so frequently. You weren't totally responsible - for not going.

R: Because my Mum, she started - she started working full-time again - so we didn't - and then I got a job. We used to go on Sundays for Sunday lunch and - then I got a job so it was very hard to go...

V: Mmm.

R: And see her. And she used to write. I used to write to her. And she used to write to me. It still didn't feel right. I just didn't feel like I had the right - because - and she left me her ring in her will, as well, so - er, she said that I had to sell it - because it was bad luck or something.

V: She asked you to sell it? She'd left you a ring to sell?

R: And then to buy something with the money.

V: Ah, right!

R: As a memory of her.

V: Yes, yes. So have you done that?

R: No, not yet.

V: But you will do.

R: I've just got to get it valued and then... maybe... But that made me feel really bad as well.

V: Yeah.

R: Especially when my - um - my Aunty gave it to me - not my Aunty, my [gran's/dad's] sister.

V: That's your Aunty.

R; My Dad's sister-in-law. Hahaha!

V: That's your aunt by marriage. It's still your aunt, I think.

R; Yeah. Um. She gave it to me and it was really bad. I felt - the funeral was really bad actually.

V: In what way bad?

R; I just felt so out of place. I think because my stepdad was there as well and he had met her a couple of times. Um. And I think we all felt slightly out of place because - all the other, the rest of the family they lived quite close by - and I mean they all lived in Westown - and so they really were all together, and it just felt like we were out of it. I think that was - what made it feel a bit dreadful. I mean... [.....] my Dad's brother and his wife...

V: Mmm, was he younger than your Dad would have been?

R: Um. I don't know, I think he may be slightly younger. But er - that was quite a bad day. And I - I think that got me thinking about death again.

V: Inevitably.

R: Yeah.

V: Every death, I think, reminds you of the others in your life you've ever had. And in some ways, perhaps, your Gran's death - finishes the circle on your father. She was there when he died,

R: Mmm.

V: Then you drew apart from her, now she's dead and you hadn't seen her for some time, and there's an awful lot of 'if only' - as you say, guilt - going on there, but it's also I think a fairly - perhaps, important reminder of your Dad.

R: Maybe that's why I didn't want to go to see her - because of that reminder.

V: She'd been there when he died. That may be one thing, but also she was his Mum.

R: Yeah.

V: We do all sorts of funny things in life when we avoid people or don't talk with them and sometimes we don't quite know why. Your Mum, of course was, in some sense, part of this not going to see Gran for all sorts of very good reasons. You know she needed to - just distance herself.

R: Yeah.

V: To rebuild her own life - and so did you, too - that's not unreasonable.

R: No.

V: But it doesn't take the guilt feeling away?

R: No!

V: You still wish you'd been to see her more frequently.

R: Yeah. ... She always used to - send me Christmas cards and Christmas presents and I know I used to go and see her then but, just towards the end - it... I suppose, when I found out she had cancer it scared me a little bit - but I don't know why - maybe that's why I didn't want to go and see her as well...

V: ... I don't know - I can't begin to guess what your ideas are - what kind of death is OK. I mean, you were used to sudden death...

R: Mmm!

V: Strange kind of death to get used to, actually. It's much more common for people to die of some kind of illness in their old age. I mean, she must have been a bit older. How old was she? 60? 70?

R: Um. Yeah, late 70s.

V: So that's much more normal and to get cancer even - although we would not wish it on most people - it's, it's life. Whereas the other deaths had been untimely and sudden and you hadn't been prepared for them.

R: Yeah, that's right.

V: Maybe it was a question of getting prepared for her death.

R: Yeah, but, it's - if I knew she was going to die - somehow I didn't want to see her. Maybe in my subconscious mind [.....] I just didn't feel like I could go and see her.

V: So, as you say, it was a year ago. Or a year before her death that you saw her. You hadn't seen her much more recently. And [you] seem to be saying: "I know I stayed away".

R: Yeah. [.....] [takes tissues]

V: I had to stay away from work yesterday. I had such a bad throat and I thought I'd wait and see how I feel because I didn't want to breathe germs all over you so I just dosed myself up with Beechams Powders and it seems to have worked. It's sort of killed it in a day! I've never been so - but I've been walking round with these in my pocket all day long - boxes of them.

R: Hahaha!

V: When you do sell the ring and buy something, what sort of thing will you buy?

R: I don't know. I don't think I'll buy another ring. Maybe a locket or something. To put a picture in. Um, maybe. I don't know really. Yeah, a locket I would say. I've got one but it's - I like lockets.

V: It would also remind you of your Dad, I guess - they're all in there - and your brother could be in there! In a sense she's giving you the chance to buy something that can remind you of all of them.

R: Um. Yeah.

V: I asked you earlier about timely death and, as I'm saying, your Gran's death was much more timely than the others so you've now had some exposure, some experience, of - two very untimely deaths and one much more normal and natural. Going back to what we were saying earlier about accepting it within the framework of some kind of faith or belief or God's will, how does Gran fit in with that?

R: Um, I don't know. As you say I've had to accept it much more - as - because I *knew* she was going to die. It's hard to explain - cos - I suppose that's - if you think about it, you know, she was just, well, she was old...

V: Mmm.

R: So you can accept it more, can't you?

V: Yes, I think you can

R: Whereas cos my father - my father and brother were so young - it just seems unacceptable.

V: Because you think, you know, they'd hardly lived. My brother had hardly lived when he died. So what was the point of him being born in the first place? I find that hard to accept sometimes. ... I can't explain really, it's really hard.

V: So are you saying something like: "It made a bit more sense for my Gran to die..."

R: Yeah.

V: "Because - it was right, she was old, she was ill, and people die when they're older? But the other two deaths, my brother in particular, he'd hardly begun - when his life was taken from him. I can't make much sense of that but I can make a bit more sense of my Gran's death".

R: Yeah.

V: Mmm.

R: Yeah, that's what I'm trying to say! Haha!

V: Do you think there *is* a purpose to life? That we're here for a purpose? That there's any reason why we're sitting in this room this evening - or on this earth at all? This is a hard question, I know.

R: A very hard question!

V: Are we random? Did it just happen that we're all here?

R: Umm.... That's a really hard question...

V: You might want to come back to it. I often wonder why we're here. It seems as if the world's been set up all very neatly for us, we slot into it, but I wonder if it

really is - as it seems to be. And what's happened to those who've been born before us? Where are they in all this plan?

R: All those thousands.

V: Yes, millions of people who have died!

R: Seems pointless, doesn't it, life sometimes?

V: Well, yes, it does.

R: We haven't got an aim on earth - in life - have we?

V: Unless we make one for ourselves, I wonder?

R: Yeah. We haven't - we just sort of - reproduce and that's it!

V: Yes! That's the one thing...

R: Men can't do that anyway so...

V: Uhuh.

R: Doesn't seem like there's a purpose to life, really.

V: There doesn't seem a very evident one, I agree, and I wonder if part of the purpose and the meaning, if there is one, is that you have to make it for yourself - and, focus on life? For example, after your Dad died - and perhaps your brother too, but your Dad's death is a little later and therefore much more clear in your mind, perhaps - did things change? Did you do anything different, for example, did you stop anything that you'd done before - even things like painting or reading or writing or making models or whatever - did you stop one thing and start another, put your energies into new directions?

R: Um.

V: Or just stop doing anything at all? Think "Oh, blast, I'm not doing any more! That's it!"

R: I don't think I did. No. I didn't, no - I didn't do... I don't think I stopped anything. I think - I started reading more, I think

V: Well, yes, you've said that you actually went to books to find out some answers

R: Yes, but even as - even maybe after my father died - I- I just started reading more books. Not, not just, you know, any books -

V: Mmm.

R: But then I became a real reader. A bookworm. I used to read all of Enid Blyton's books. I don't know maybe that - whether that had something to do with it. I remember - my Dad, because he was a magician -

V: Oh really?

R: Yeah. He used to do children's parties and things like that. I always used to remember when he was practising in the bedroom...

V: Mmm.

R: He used to practice his act - and I always used to listen at the door - because I was intrigued about how, how he did it - And he always used to find out that I was there.

V: Haha! That's because he was a magician!

R: Haha! I used to sit outside the door and ... I missed that a bit afterwards. Because I used to do it every week, you know. He used to have the - the magic thing, this big box, and I used to look at it and think: "Oh I wish I could do that!" I think I missed that a bit afterwards.

V: Have you tried any tricks like that or are you merely - you've never done so?

R: No. I did try it once but I didn't get very far. It was only a sort of starter box. Hahaha! But I didn't really - do anything after that. I don't know why.

V: Mmm.

R: And I always - I remember after my Dad's funeral I think it was - I just remember - we had - because you know you go back to someone's house - and we went back to our house - and I remember getting my teddy bear out and, you know you stick your hand up it - hahaha. I don't know if you know it, Micky, he used to be on TV? Micky. ... I remember going - round - to all the guests and I was - I had cheered up by then -

V: Mmm.

R: Because I remember, and I think you know, they were trying to help me or something, and I remember just being quite happy. I didn't seem to understand. Or I just happened to be... And I just - I will always remember that.

V: Going round with your - your teddy bear?

R: Yeah, yeah. It was quite big, you know, it used to sit on my lap when I was sitting on the sofa... and there was all these people round me, quietly chatting. I will always remember that. I don't know why.

V: Well, it was a memorable day and you remember one thing that you did on it.

R: Yeah.

V: You were only 8, of course, and you didn't yet know that death - lasts forever, Although your brother's death [maybe] had given you some knowledge of that. But you still didn't know - how it would feel for the rest of your life. I mean, kids often do that - behave in - most odd ways - or so they think afterwards - Um. Mmm.

R: Yeah, I've still got that teddy - somewhere.

V: Yeah, I'm sure you have. Maybe it's one of your - treasured possessions!

R: Yeah.

V: Something that reminds you of your Dad? I've asked you about a kind of a meaning to life and I guess I'm always asking the same kind of question, but it often comes out slightly differently. It's something like: how did their deaths.... all right, yes: school. Was school any different - after your brother's death and your Dad's death?

R: Um, I - they both made me quieter. Much quieter.

V: Did school do anything special - to make it easier for you - that you remember?

R: I suppose they comforted me a little bit because of my friends there - I had a lot of friends there - because I'd grown up with all of them - so maybe that helped. Just getting me away - and not having to think about it.

V: Yes.

R: And even when I did think about it, because I was busy at school all day, I didn't have to think about it but - I remember having a couple of days off school after the funeral.

V: That's Dad's funeral?

R: Yeah. And - I remember going back to school and everyone was asking me about it.

V: Right, so they did ask and they didn't ignore you - or sort of avoid you?

R: No.

V: This is a school in Winston?

R: Yeah, [.....] school. Um. I found it really hard to talk to them about it but then I would, wouldn't I?

V: Why?

R: I don't know, I just - I found it difficult - I would always end up in tears - because I knew they'd gone, and you couldn't do anything to bring them back.

V: No.

R: Oh, I just - I didn't like them asking about it. I didn't mind talking to my - my friend about it - my best friend, Verity - whose sister died - because we'd been - well, we'd sort of been together since we were 3. So we'd been through quite a lot together.

V: So maybe Verity - you sensed she knew something of how you might feel because she'd been through a similar experience?

R: That was - ah, I think that was afterwards.

V: Was it?

R: Yeah. It wasn't - it was after my Dad's death... Yeah... She always seems to understand how I feel - even now.

V: Some friends always do, I think. Some friends are very good at reading us and others aren't. They think they are really good friends and yet they walk all over our corns and never seem to realize we're feeling sad or -

R: Yeah.

V: Or solemn. So, so school was reasonably OK? Teachers, friends, were supportive or - you didn't feel stared at or left out...

R: No, no, not at all.

V: And as far as you remember you kept up with the work that was thrown at you!

R: Yeah, I enjoyed primary school, actually. I remember playing in the - I remember being in the orchestra, playing the tenor recorder, going to kung-fu lessons and - yes, I was quite happy at school. I don't think I changed much after that. Going back, maybe being a bit quieter for a while.

V: Mmm.

R: But then you would.

V: Yes, you would, yes, you're quite right. And this - this becoming quieter - is that a part of your personality which changed again or is, has, become a part of you, a constant part of you now?

R: Um. I can be pretty quiet at times - I'm not a really loud person!

V: No, I didn't think you were! Haha!

R: Haha! Um. Sometimes, I think, sometimes I think I'm a bit louder than usual because I want attention. Maybe that's coming from being so close to my Mum. I've always got a lot of attention from my Mum - because - I mean, she didn't spoil me or anything like that when - we were together - she just sort of just got the right balance - she knew when to say no -

V: Mmm.

R: So maybe that's - and I'm used to being the centre of attention so maybe that's why - I mean, I mean I'm not that loud now, but maybe it started - a couple of years ago, maybe I was.

V: Oh, right, so you are saying: "I was quiet for a while after my Dad's death and then I got loud again."

R: Yeah.

V: "And now I've sort of moderated, I'm - I can be - but generally I'm not. My personality has got back to how it used to be or ..."

R: Yeah, yeah. I can be quite moody sometimes. And get... [end of tape]

(New tape)

R: Um - sometimes - if we have an argument or anything I think - you're not my real Dad anyway - but I know I shouldn't say that, somehow it's wrong to say that but - I think, you know, "You can't tell me what to do."

V: Mmm.

R: And ever since he met my Mum he's never ever made a decision about my life - he's so good like that - he'll leave the really important decisions up to my Mum - like whether I can - I don't know, let me think of an example. I don't know, just even maybe sometimes *little* decisions that I have to - get the authority. He'll always pass it over to my Mum because he doesn't - I don't think he feels he has the right to do it. Because he's not my real parent. Um. But I'm very close to him.

V: How long has he been around in your life now, then?

R: About 4 years.

V: Mmm.

R: Four or four and a half years...

V: So to start with, how did you get on with him?

R: Fine.

V: And now, more or less the same?

R: Yeah, oh yeah, we're very close, we don't have any fights. That's quite good actually, we're a very close family now. I don't, I don't like fighting anyway, but... it it just - we just get on so well. It's funny cos they met through a dating agency as well and I'm sure my Mum never told me about that, I'm sure she never. I remember him coming up to our house one day - and they went out for a drink and, um, I'll always remember the day he walked up the steps because he was

quite chubby, he was quite chubby. Haha! I went: "Oh, isn't he fat? Haha!" Like that. And um - but I get on with him...

V: You were about 12 then, weren't you?

R: Yes, so... I was ... but, er, um, from the moment when we met, they went out the first day, I really liked him. You know, and my Mum was so happy - that I was happy for her.

V: Mmm.

R: We never argue, hardly ever. And if we do, it's about minor things, you know, that can be just discussed. That's what we try and do. We try and sit down and discuss things rather than shout at each other.

V: That's quite a wise way of resolving it. Shouting doesn't get you very far, does it?

R: No, not at all.

V: So really you like him because - no, this may not be quite what you said but something like - because: Mum was happy with him which told me that he was OK too, so I like him anyway, but I like him even more because Mum likes him.

R: Yeah.

V: And he's OK for me and very thoughtful and, um, doesn't push into my life. He doesn't come heavy.

R: Yes, definitely.

V: Because clearly you're still thinking - occasionally, anyway - "You're not really my Dad, you know, you have no right to say this or that".... although it doesn't happen very often, but there are times...

R: But - at times like that I think I'm angry anyway.

V: Mmm.

R: Really it's just something that's happened at school or things like that - but that's what gets me angry in the first place. It's not just - something that's happened between us - it's something else behind it as well - that makes me angry.

V: Yeah! Sometimes we don't know why - and sometimes we *do* know why but you - it's kicking the cat syndrome isn't it? Something upsets you somewhere else and you come home and have a go at somebody, some one else ... Hmmm. So your family unit has changed. You started out with a brother and a Dad and a Mum and you, and now it's Mum and you and another Dad. And you've lost two people by the way. The Gran who was part of - your life before...

R: Mmm

V: She's also died, so your - what constitutes your basic family unit has changed. You've got somebody new in it and you've lost two. How, how does that feel?

R: Um, I don't know, it just feels like - I've just started my life again - somehow. So I'm somewhere along the way. I've just - because - but - because everything's changed such a lot, I mean we've got a new house now, you know, I think - well, it doesn't really feel like it's happened. It just seems like we've just been the three of us all the time.

V: How long have you been in the new house?

R: Um, about three years. Three and a half years.

V: Oh. Um, I've just spotted it's twenty to nine.

R: Oh!

V: We've had an hour at least.

R: Yeah, OK then.

V: Shall we stop?

R: OK. Have you got many more questions?

V: I've got some more things I'd like to ask you.

R: OK then.

V: But I'm just thinking that perhaps we'll stop because we said we'd have an hour.....

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