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DENOMINATIONAL RITUALS AS INFLUENCERS
OF GRIEF ADJUSTMENT

by

Suzanne Jean Martz Webb

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Educational Leadership

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 1991

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Denominational rituals as influencers of grief adjustment

Webb, Suzanne Jean Martz, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University, 1991

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Dedicated
to
Christopher James Webb
who has always known his mother
as a student
and
who hopefully will appreciate the joy
of lifelong education

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Suzanne Jean Martz Webb

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The myth and ritual of a culture provide meaning and structure for a people. Myth models an interpretation of life and the presentation of an ideal, while ritual is the form by which the people act out that interpretation (Gaster, 1984). Life crises are met according to the myths that people value. Grief is a major crisis in which people are helped by using their society's myths and rituals. Most organized religions, including the church, have been primary teachers and keepers of a culture's myth. Using the rituals of the church to ease people through the pain of grief has historically been one of the major means of ministry (Jackson, 1959). However, there is little evidence of just how helpful various degrees of ritualized ministry affect the adjustment of grieving people.

Grief is a natural and inevitable human response. People experience losses throughout their lives, and grieving is the process of adapting to those losses. Even though loss is not a choice, personal development and growth can be precipitated by grieving. When people are able to involve themselves in creative change because of grief, it can actually be the stimulus to growth or emotional wellness (Casseem, 1975).

Individual situations vary, but there are stages of grief through which everyone passes. Grief does not seem to be a linear

process marked with a specific time line (Jackson, 1959). Grievers have different paces. When the mourning process is thwarted, however, the griever might stay in one stage and become pathologically ill (Bane, Kutscher, Neale, & Reeves, 1975).

Death is the universal experience which provokes grief. Some cultures avoid or deny death while others affirm, plan for, and celebrate its relationship to life. There is a tendency for white, Western people of North America to deny both the description and experience of death (Ryan, 1983-84). Americans characteristically idealize youthful life and antiseptically deal with death. In our society, most people die in the hospital and are immediately taken to the mortuary. The bodies are then made to appear as healthy specimens unlike the atrocity that perhaps marked their death. People are protected, therefore, from the reality of the death experience (Kübler-Ross, 1975). Morticians helped create the "death denial" in America by assuming funeral arrangements that had previously belonged to the family or church (Mitford, 1963).

Scholars approach mythology from various structural, historical, psychological, and sociological perspectives. Honko (1984), for example, delineates some approaches to myth: the projection of the subconscious, a form of symbolic expression, legitimating of social institutions, marker of social relevance, and mirror of culture. Within this variety myth always expresses the values of a culture. Myth needs to be shared if there is to be a future for a society.

Celebrations of weddings, births, or deaths provide opportunities for people to help each other through new experiences. Communal rituals allow people to share meaning in life. They are based on a mythology that gives a broad explanation of life. Every culture has a set of myths by which it lives. They give perspective and understanding to what occurs throughout life. Without them there would be no guidelines for everyday or major experiences (Campbell, 1988). Using established formulas or rites, communities are drawn together through the expression of emotion (Underhill, 1936). Activities designed for specific times alleviate uncertainty and ambiguity about appropriate responses to life. Events which mark stages of life are flavored with certain celebrations and expectations. Rites to accompany all these situations link people together and clarify the meaning of the time.

Rituals are usually, though not always, considered religious. In organized religion, rituals serve as the link between the object of devotion (God, gods and goddesses, Christ, etc.) and how the culture responds in action directed toward that object. They also serve as a way to unite people celebrating a common history or belief.

Developing means through which people can cope with changes, difficulties, and appreciation of life are parts of the structuring within a religious group. Religious congregations usually support and validate growth and development and are, therefore, concerned with helping people through those experiences.

Some religious traditions have extensive systems of rites. The rites are meant to both accompany and help make sense of the high and low points of people's lives. When children are born, the faith community often celebrates the birth through baptism or dedication. At some point in those children's education and nurture, a time is set aside to have them proclaim or confirm their faith. Weddings are an integral part of the faith community. Memorial services for those who have died honor their lives and try to help ease the pain of grief. There are liturgies or rituals in worship for all of these experiences (Campbell, 1988).

Traditions (or minor rituals) often accompany the rituals commemorating life's crises. At the time of death, these traditions serve as expressions of faith when words are either inadequate or difficult to speak. Taking food to the bereaved, offering support through visits or phone calls, planning a wake, or participating in a funeral liturgy are minor rituals to help a community cope during grief. Confusion may be rampant during grief if there are not set patterns of behavior (Rickgarn, 1987). Kübler-Ross (1975) claimed that cultures which deny death also deny rituals of mourning. Cultures that openly deal with death's relationship to life often have rites to express those beliefs. These rituals contribute to the security of the bereaved and larger community at critical times.

Faith communities usually provide a support system during grief. Though clergy are not primarily therapists, nor are churches capable of being group therapy systems, they play a vital role in helping people move through grief expressions.

Rituals and liturgies of faith communities vary extensively. Certain denominations within Christendom have routines to build and support their communities through all aspects and changes of life. Others respond as each situation arises. At the time of death, some communities will respond with generally accepted activities and rites. Others have nothing specifically outlined as appropriate response. Denominations which historically have many set rituals offer expectations to their members during critical events of life. In doing this, the churches may be giving people guidelines and patterns that will be helpful during crises.

Purpose of Study

Rituals could be a means of enabling the grief process to move as smoothly as possible. Some studies have been made to compare grief adjustment and rituals. Bolton and Camp (1986-87) tried unsuccessfully to find a relationship of grief adjustment and symbolic acts that mourners did themselves (not community related). Doka (1984-85) sought to determine if participation in funeral arrangements helped in grief adjustment. Little is known, however, about the relationship of particular worship liturgies and faith community rituals to grief adjustment.

If it can be shown that denominations with more ritualized behavior foster better grief adjustment, then other denominations might begin to more fully appreciate the richness and value of ritual within their own experience. Knowing what emotional events are expected during grief and what rituals help the process, therefore,

could play an important role in ministry (Bane et al., 1975). Identification and support of specific rituals and behavioral patterns could then be used in the educational strategies for faith communities. Development of stronger ritualization within these groups may help people cope better with the losses in their lives and enable personal growth.

This study will identify rituals and traditions that are used by some mainline Christian denominations for grieving parishioners. Determining if there are differences between denominations in either the adjustment widows make during grief or the funeral rituals in which they participated at the death of their husbands is the initial research question. The second research question is whether the degree of ritual used by members of denominations impacts adjustment during grief.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter the literature about ritual and grief is reviewed. The three stages of grief are defined and explored. Myths and rituals of many cultures, especially those relating to death and grieving, are described. Rituals have developed through the centuries for communities to cope with grief. Literature shows this development. Religious groups often foster the development and continuation of rituals to support a particular value system. Christian denominations vary in their emphases on specific rituals as different values are deemed important. Short, historical synopses of three major Christian denominations are included in this chapter. Some death rituals of these denominations are also detailed. Denominations have varying emphases in ritual. These are shown through the review of literature. Then several grieving rituals of faith communities are presented and discussed.

Myth and Ritual

"A myth expresses and confirms society's religious values and norms" (Honko, 1984, p. 49). Myths function as modeling within a belief system by giving explanations (van Baaren, 1984). An interpretation of life is presented to the people of a culture and they are able to live together by sharing its meaning.

Rituals are often considered enactments of the myths. Where myth provides the verbal support for a culture, the ritual imprints those structures on the people through repetitive action. Gaster (1984) presented myth as the ideal of eternity and ritual as dramatization of a situation in the present. However, he claimed they are not two separate items but one viewed from two angles.

Mythology is the system of ideas that gives perspective. People have myths in order to understand what is happening within their lives. These myths provide guidelines for life without having each moment be a decision point. Campbell (1988) claimed that people are not really searching for meaning in life, but are seeking experiences that resonate with their inner reality. Myths are the clues to that inner spiritual potential. Though myth does not provide experiences of life, it articulates those experiences. Mythologies are the wisdoms of life and the songs of imagination. They serve as the personifying power of a value or belief system. They offer life models to compare with personal experiences (Campbell, 1988).

The form of myth is narrative. It is a verbal accounting of sacred origins. Honko (1984) wrote that the content of myth is generally about the creative, beginning of time events. However, myth is not just a story of the past or explanation of what has gone before. The listener is carried into the present, the right now, through myth (Dardel, 1984). The present, the past, and the hope for the future are linked through the culture's myth.

Myths give an order to life that fosters a sense of understanding. Speaking less about truth and more about interpretation,

mythology provides the means by which a community of people can pass on to generations a way of looking at life that has helped to make sense of all that seems to make little sense.

Ritual is formal, dramatic, and sensual, and therefore is more accessible to study than myth. While myth deals with a religious system's conceptual aspects, ritual is concerned with action. Rituals are the acting out of myths by which people live. As the myth gives clues of how to respond during certain situations, the ritual becomes the form people use. There is some dispute as to whether ritual stems from myth or vice versa. Neither view has been able to substantiate evidence to prove which comes first (Segal, 1984).

Growing out of a community's life, rituals are filled with meaning from previous experiences. They have power, because they are repetitive and do not need a script (Sullender, 1960). There is always a symbolic power in ritual. Most of the crises of people's lives are surrounded by rituals. They serve as protective agents to help people move through difficult times without having to make decisions that would be regretted later.

Throughout recorded time people have shared mythologies as explanations for the unknown within their culture. Rituals vary depending upon the society's myths. However, they are always the spiritual exercises that perpetuate fundamental wisdom. Rituals are the threads that keep the fabric of the society intact.

The children of today's American society have few rites by which they can become a part of the culture. Young people are not given many clues as to what they should be doing at different stages

of their lives. There are few set marks distinguishing one age from another, or formal initiation rites in the social order. Campbell (1988) claimed that today's people live in a largely demythologized world where the unwritten laws no longer are valid. Therefore, there is an increasing need for written laws to allow people to know right from wrong.

If rituals do help people through crises, the decreasing use of them may have ramifications the society will have to address. Without rituals the spiritual truths of a community will either die or find expression in new forms. This seems to be an important issue for those interested in perpetuating culture's wisdom and helping people through critical times.

Grief Processes

Death is final and certain. Bereavement and grief continue on--sometimes indefinitely--and have to be endured. Closure to grief is not always precise or predictable. The uncertainty of the grieving period is sometimes feared more than death. However, there seems to be no short cut to the process of grieving.

The process of mourning is work and happens only with active and total participation by the griever. If this work is not done at the initial time of the death of a loved one, or done too quickly and superficially, the process will need to be attended to later in life. Before grief work can begin, the reality of loss must be accepted. Loss of any relationship means a rupture of dependence and attachment. When this is acknowledged, the time of bereavement

can actually produce growth. The loss will provide opportunity for the griever to develop independently and move into different circumstances and situations (Cassem, 1975).

According to Bruehl (1975), the feelings of grief will be expressed in one way or another. They cannot be totally covered or sublimated. He indicated that these feelings may be expressed through ritual and symbol and then released through those experiences. They may also be expressed through psychosomatic illness. The third way that grief may be expressed is through defensiveness within relationships. The latter two options obviously will provide longer lasting vestiges of the death experience.

Normal bereavement begins with shock and disbelief, is followed by intense emotions, and then concludes as the griever moves into new and different relationships with life. Bereavement can become pathological when a person remains in the shock or emotional phase (Ramsay & Noorbergen, 1981). Grief, then, needs to be attended to if there will be a positive outcome. Though death of a loved one produces pain and other intense emotion it can also provide opportunity for change and growth.

Grief as Developmental

Adjusting to a loved one's death is a developmental process. It does not happen in one step, nor can it occur immediately. Grieving can be likened to a theory of learning.

Piaget has identified adaption and organization as the two essential processes which underlie all learning. Simple life forms

meet their needs by adapting to the environment. The adapting process allows the acquisition of new information or habits, but limited learning occurs. Because human beings have more complex situations presented to them, they organize their experiences through memory, activity, and perceptions (Beard, 1969).

Organization and adaption are complementary functions. While adaption helps people adjust to their environment, organization helps people to make sense of their experiences by developing systems. The give and take between these two processes produce growth and change in intellectual structuring (Bybee & Sund, 1982). Developmental learning occurs when organization is added to adaption. Not only do people live in their present environment, but they are empowered to remember and understand their past (Furth, 1970).

The work of grief demands both adaption and organization. Grievers are forced to experience the reality of death and so adapt to that environmental happening. At the same time, grievers will be integrating their experiences into past experiences and personal belief systems.

Stages of Grief

The stages of grief are not separate entities that can be fully experienced one at a time. They blend together, overlapping, so that it is often difficult to determine which stage a person might be living in within a given moment. Neither are the stages necessarily successive. Even though authors delineate specific stages and usually with a particular sequence, Bugin (1977) claimed that

not all people experience the stages in the same order. He indicated that some griever miss steps altogether. The intensity and longevity within a particular stage depends on an individual. Kreis and Pattie (1969) agreed that the duration of each stage is individual. They added, however, that the depth of loss is a significant variable.

Grief can be likened to the successive stages of mental development. Each stage extends the preceding one, reconstructs it, and surpasses it. Every person will go through the same stages but they will be customized by their own experiences. Grief development, like cognitive development has a constant order of succession, but each individual's stages will vary in intensity and specific character (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

Several authors agree that there are three basic stages within the grief process (Charmaz, 1980; Clayton, 1975; Kreis & Pattie, 1969; J. Nichols & Nichols, 1975). The initial phase is shock. The middle step varies in its name but is identified with the basic work and suffering of grief. The last stage is the adaption or recovery time.

Shock is identified as the protective covering from the reality and pain of grief. Clayton (1975) identified this as numbness. This is a time of disorganization and struggle between fantasy and reality. When the numbness wears off, the author stated the belief that people are struck with debilitating depression. At this time people do not deal well with the world around them and shut themselves away from everything. Reality of the situation becomes too

much to handle. Recovery, according to Clayton (1975), cannot come until one passes through this depression time. Recovery, therefore, does not come immediately after the numbness wears off. It will come only when the griever is allowed to experience the depths of depression.

Charmaz (1980) identified the three stages as transition, realization, and reintegration. These are basically the same as shock, suffering, and recovery, but more in-depth description is written about the initial stage. The denial of pain is usually apparent in transition. Observers often do not understand this stage because they expect the griever to be more expressional in pain. However, this denial of feeling comes from the griever's desire to carry out the expectations of the community. There is a misinterpretation of expectations. The confusion only adds to upheaval at this time. During the time of transition, the bereaved believe the world is unreal and disjointed. Not knowing what they are supposed to feel or express, and yet desiring to meet the community's expectations is perplexing. Secondly, a griever goes through realization. For Charmaz (1980), the bereaved at this time begin to realize the extent of loss and are able to fully feel pain. Depression seems to envelope grievers as they begin the work of separating from the deceased. This is the work stage. Reintegration finally occurs when the griever has separated from the deceased and new meanings and purposes are allowed to develop. The deceased no longer has to be considered in every situation.

Ramsay and Noorbergen's (1981) treatment of grief stages is somewhat different from other authors'. By separating the second stage (suffering) into disorganization and searching, they identify the grief process with four stages. For them the first stage is shock. This can be momentary or last for several weeks. Shock is a protective state when reality is not allowed to enter one's perception. Secondly, griever's go through disorganization. The authors identify this time as one in which people are paralyzed. Searching is next. There is a mild restlessness and insomnia with this stage. Many people have vivid dreams and seem to be preoccupied. Emotional components that appear at this time vary in importance and intensity. They do not occur in any particular order but include desolate pining, guilt, shame, despair, anxiety, jealousy, protest, and aggression. All of these emotions are real, but many people are frightened of expressing them. Denial is the defense mechanism used when pain is intense. Through denial, griever's may turn off the process for a period of time. Ramsay and Noorbergen (1981) indicated that a letting go of denial allows the pain to be experienced. Resolution can then follow. The realization that life will go on ebbs the bereaved into reintegration with surroundings.

Jackson (1959) primarily wrote about the suffering or work stage of grief. This is the main determinant to the psychological health of the griever. He specified three emotions of this period that need attention. Identifying them as incorporation, substitution, and guilt, each is a normal feeling which may be resolved. If expression of that feeling is denied, however, the feeling will find

an inappropriate outlet. Incorporation is the identification with the deceased. A griever takes on the feelings of the deceased. Sometimes this goes to the extreme of actually taking on the illness of the dead person. Although this seems to be a dangerous process, it actually serves to curb the stress of grieving. It allows the griever to believe they can be united with the loved one who has just died.

Substitution, Jackson's (1959) second psychological process for mourners, is also a protective device. Grievers invest power in physical attachments such as cemetery plots, memorials, endowments, and clothes. As long as they can continue to deal with the power in things outside of themselves, they are protected from realizing the impact of the death on their lives.

The third psychological process that arises is the feeling of guilt. Ultimately, death means freedom from a relationship and that is often difficult to accept and appreciate. Grievers, therefore, feel a sense of guilt that they are free. Being free can, of course, be a positive as well as a negative feeling. Most griever do not believe they deserve a positive feeling after someone they loved has suffered death. Consequently, because that feeling is present, they must cover it.

Successful grief work can bring positive readjustment. Though the stages are not always identified, grief is usually organized around three experiences. Breaking the bonds of the relationship to the deceased is another way to describe the first stage. Many will deny their willingness or desire to be emancipated from their loved

one. This often is seen as unfaithfulness but it is necessary. Secondly, readjustment to the environment from which the deceased is missing is essential. Last, a griever develops new relationships. All of these must be lived and worked through in order for good results to occur. The results, therefore, are consequences of working through the stages but cannot be seen as separate ends that mourners would seek.

The adjustment during grief can be measured through an instrument developed by Carey (1977). This eight-item self-report instrument, called the Adjustment Scale, is a quantitative measure which can locate a person on a continuum between adjustment and depression. The Adjustment Scale can help determine if people are moving through the work stage of grief or if they are stuck in the depression aspect of it.

Stages of Grief as Developmental Process

After the death of a loved one, most people go through a state of shock and separation from any real feeling. Secondly, they will go through a time of suffering or depression when the reality of death is faced. The intense work of bereavement occurs at this stage (Charmaz, 1980; Clayton, 1975; J. Nichols & Nichols, 1975). When griever attend to that work and face the emotional turmoil of the time, they move to the reintegrating stage when grief recovery occurs. Most people cannot accept the total suffering at one point and through denial move back into the shock stage. This back and forth motion is like Piaget's theory of environmental adaption and

organization. Human beings accept from their environment what they can understand and adapt to their system. Then they have to integrate it into their higher sense-making system. At that point they will be able to accept more from their environment and adapt to it.

Cross Cultural Death Rituals

All cultures have ceremonial events to permit the expression of feelings at the crisis events of life. Many times these are unconscious evolutions rather than designed practices. Each major life experience is marked with a ritual or pattern that helps a person work through and make sense of it. Birth, puberty, marriage, old age, and death have accompanying rites that unite the people specifically involved with the present social order and their ancestors.

Every society has a pattern of ritualized behavior for dealing with death. Even though individuals may not be prepared for a particular death, the group to which they belong has an unwritten plan of action to be put into place when it occurs. This arises out of their mythology.

Authors often interchange the words grief, mourning, and bereavement. Each word signifies the intense, emotional suffering caused by the loss or death of another person (Carr, 1975; Jackson, 1975; Rosenblatt, Walsh, & Jackson, 1976). Ramsay and Noorbergen (1981) further delineated bereavement and grief by indicating that bereavement is the state a person is in after losing a significant person. Grief is the emotional, psychological, and bodily reaction that the person manifests in response to that loss. Charmaz (1980)

made the same distinction and further stated that mourning is the process through which grief is faced, resolved, or altered. The terms, however, are often interchanged so that grief, bereavement, and mourning all refer to the state of being during adjustment to the loss of a loved one. The work process of that state (the verb) may be called: grieve, bereave, mourn.

In any culture there are expectations about how grief will be expressed. These are identified through appropriate mourning behavior or mourning rituals. Cultural themes will be played out, because all individual responses have roots in a cultural experience. Therefore, grief, bereavement, and mourning need to be seen in terms of social relationships.

Jackson (1959) maintained that because grief moves to the emotional core of people, it is important to have practices that will highlight and express those feelings rather than sedate or sublimate them. Rituals, therefore, have evolved as ways to vent emotions or mourn during critical times like death.

Sullender (1960) presented ritual as the healthy facilitator of grief. He stated the belief that there are two poles within grief. Those poles balance structure with release, remembering with forgetting, and confrontation with comfort. Rituals provide activity in which people may move between the poles. The rituals contain and control people, as well as allow them personal expressions of emotion.

Rituals of bereavement are not meant to be of any value to the deceased. They are of value to the living. Parkes (1972) explained

that physical and social death are not the same and do not happen at the same time. Physical death is an event that can be expressed in time. Social death or that which is experienced by those left living is more ambiguous in time conception. The rituals of death make that process of social death begin.

There seem to be two major reasons for a ceremonialized pattern marking a death: separating the body from the living and assisting the mourners in adjustment (Irion, 1981). The ritual at the time of the funeral is meant to give the mourner a process to restructure life without the presence of the deceased. There is also opportunity for a group or community to join in the expression of loss.

Studying rituals of a society is a means of understanding the people. The importance of relationships within the community, the understanding of time, and the fear of death or evil spirits are three major concepts addressed through grief rituals.

The Irish, Hawaiians, and South Indian Kotas reinforce community values through their funeral procedures. The Irish, for example, are seriously concerned about their involvement with other people. After a person dies, the rest of the community must continue the relationships of the deceased. Keening or feuding is accelerated during bereavement in order to assure that the deceased will not be forgotten. Storytelling, making special foods, and drinking to loosen the tongues of eulogizers all enhance socialization. The emphasis of the Irish is to continue life with as little disruption as possible (Ryan, 1983-84). Hawaiians emphasize community life and the support that develops within it. Their rituals teach the

concept of friends and neighbors sharing difficult times with each other. Friends of the deceased are called in as participants for a wailing procession. A luau following the burial is the time to thank everyone who carried the casket, dug the hole, and made the coffin. Through these rituals children learn and the community remembers that grief is shared with friends and neighbors (Kübler-Ross, 1975). Through funeral rituals, the Kotas teach the distinct differences between men and women. While women lament and wail during most of the funeral preparation, the men spend their time preparing the body, the grave, and the ceremony. There are set times for the men to cry, but these are limited (Mandelbaum, 1959). Varying priorities of community life are indicated in specific rituals. All three communities cited strive to maintain a basic truth of their societies. For the Irish, the emphasis on feuding and good-natured arguing extends after death. The South Indians stress community involvement but mark gender differences in the means of participation. The Hawaiians emphasize the need an individual has for the community during stressful times. All three cultures stress community life, but emphasize one specific aspect of it during their funeral rituals.

Developing parameters of time for mourning is the second theme of funeral rituals. Time of grieving is associated with the rhythm of a particular culture. The Cocopas are Indian Agriculturalists of Arizona. Their death ritual is a violent, family grief for 24 hours. Then cremation and a creation ritual takes place. This procedure undergirds their agricultural way of living. Extensive

time cannot be spared or inserted in the rhythm they have with the land (Mandelbaum, 1959). The Kotas (South India) allow a longer bereavement. Their funerals last for 11 days. Deep mourning takes place during the first week. The last night of the week is spent at the cremation grounds. When the morning star is seen by the bereaved, the mood is abruptly changed as dancing and feasting begin. In this way the Kota society protects their bereaved through a time of shock and then gives them a precise time to return to normal living. The rites themselves reinforce the essential rhythm of life (Mandelbaum, 1959). Both of these cultures have built in expectations associated with rituals. All the people involved know those expectations and, therefore, will usually act accordingly.

Fear of death or evil spirits is the last theme addressed in rituals of many cultures. The Squamish and Cocopas believe that the dead have great powers. Cremation of the body and personal property of the deceased is mandatory. This ensures that the evil spirit of the dead will not return to the living (Mandelbaum, 1959; Ryan, 1983-84). The Squamish take more precautions because of this belief. Personal property of the deceased is burned 4 days after death. Before that time, however, much care is taken lest the deceased attempts to pull living beings into death. Water is the separator of earth and spirit so a bucket of water is placed at the door. All doors and windows are closed and lights left on during these 4 days so the newly deceased will not have access to the living (Ryan, 1983-84). Hopi Indians respond to their fear of death by not having any ritual to accompany it. The women cry very little

and never publicly. Those who touch the dead body must go through mandatory purification rituals (Mandelbaum, 1959).

Much of North American culture fears death and attempts to deny it. Though scientific knowledge has increased our ability to control birth and delay death, it has not been able to conquer them. This is often seen as an inadequacy or embarrassment. McCracken (1975) contended that the inability to stop death has led to denial of the subjective emotional response within grief. Judaism, however, opposes repression of emotions. Jewish funerals, therefore, have definite times for open expression of grief. The eulogy is meant to make mourners aware of their loss. When a death occurs, immediate plans for the burial are made by the chief mourner. Then the bereaved are not sheltered or excused from the grief but must immediately begin facing it (Gordon, 1975).

How a culture fears or faces death is evident in the funeral rituals. Some retreat totally from the pain and the rites are almost insignificant. Other cultures have developed extensive ways to meet their fears of death through ritual.

Teaching community values, developing specific time parameters for mourning, and facing fears about death are all done through rituals of a community at the time of death. The actions of the rituals educate as well as comfort in these difficult times.

Whatever the beliefs are in a social order, the rites will reinforce those. Every social structure has some understanding of death and perpetuates that through its myths and rituals. The rites vary from one society to another, because the myths are developed

from different needs. Studying the death rituals give an understanding of the fundamental truths of a people.

Death ceremonies, because of their basis in the culture's myth, bolster the solidarity of the group. This in turn perpetuates that belief system expressed in the mythology of the culture. This cyclical reinforcement unifies the community at the same time as providing security for individuals at critical times of life. Through these ceremonies the people of a culture are drawn together because of the ultimate understandings they share about life (Rando, 1984). Though people think of a funeral in personal terms, it always has societal consequences. The community has a pattern for dealing with the death of one of its members even if the individuals involved are totally unprepared. Therefore, the thread that runs through death rituals is the myth about death and life for a specific culture (Mandelbaum, 1959).

Denominational Differences

Various Christian communities have evolved because of historical events, cultural differences, and theological controversies. Practices and rituals have developed according to those differences. Just as specific cultures celebrate certain rites because of their underlying myths, so different religious communities practice specific acts because of their history and cultural backgrounds. Fundamental to all Christian communities is belief in resurrection. Though there may be differences in interpreting its meaning, the basic belief is that the body dies and some essential part of the

life of the individual is not irretrievably lost.

The Roman Catholic church is ritually complex and always incorporates ritual in its life and practice. The United Methodists have an accepted form of ritual (liturgy) within their worship, but expect a personal response from the people. Being the least ritualistic of the three, the Reformed Church in America, nevertheless has formal and informal rites. However, expectations about personal expression and the use of ritual would be minimal in the Reformed church. Therefore, on a continuum, the Roman Catholic church is ritually complex, the United Methodist church is less so, and the Reformed Church in America even less so.

Roman Catholic Church

"Catholic" is an adjective meaning geographically and institutionally universal and uninterrupted with the past. Since the 16th century "Roman Catholic" has described that part of the Christian faith which acknowledges the pope of Rome as head of the church. Roman Catholicism is that part of the Church which professes traditional Christian creeds and bases its life around the celebration of seven sacraments. Reverencing tradition, Roman Catholics consider it very much a part of the authority of the church (Crim, 1981). Maintaining the traditions of the church has been a way to carry on the teachings of the church. Ritual serves as the means to experience and give life to the traditions and, therefore, has a very significant role in the life of the Roman Catholic church.

The body as well as the soul is viewed as God's gift. Through bodily senses (sight, hearing, and smell) people get in touch with their hearts and minds. Ritual, for Roman Catholicism, therefore, is often linked to sensory activities (Proctor, 1907). Campbell (1988), who grew up Roman Catholic, claimed that an advantage of Catholicism is that myth is taken seriously. Rituals are stressed to teach and live out the fundamentals of faith.

When Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council in 1962, great change occurred in the life of the Roman Catholic church because of his leadership. A new liturgy was introduced, the worship setting was changed, and the priests began reading in the language of the people rather than Latin. Many of the rites and ceremonies were changed at this time (Bokenkotter, 1977). Ritual, however, is still vitally important to this part of the church.

Roman Catholics view the funeral as an instrument for prayer and salvation of the soul. This ceremony honors the memory of the deceased as well as the body. Presence of the body is important in their services to reinforce the reality of death (Patterson, 1975). Priests have options within the funeral rite to adapt a service to the life of the deceased. However, there is a definite order and there are ample selections of scripture readings and prayers from which to choose. The priest is encouraged to give a homily which emphasizes the mystery of death and resurrection rather than eulogizing the deceased. Also included in a Roman Catholic funeral is the celebration of the Eucharist.

United Methodist Church

The English Reformation provided the heritage of the United Methodist church. King Henry VIII was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic church when he sought a marriage annulment. The Church of England (commonly called Anglican or Episcopalian) began as a midway church between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. United Methodists inherited this position and enriched it with an evangelistic fervor (Kerr, 1975).

John Wesley was educated at Oxford and was an ordained priest of the Church of England. Other students first used the name "Methodist" to ridicule his highly methodical and disciplined ways. Moving to the American colonies in the early 1700s, Wesley was the initiator of circuit riders. He developed a system where preachers were assigned to a geographic area in which to preach, pray, and visit. Annually, the preachers gathered for an intensive period of worship, study, and discussion about faith. The methodical ways were confined to the system itself. The ministers who traveled from town to town preached a simple gospel that demanded an immediate and personal religious experience. This created a mix of discipline and evangelistic enthusiasm. John Wesley was devoted to a structure of worship, but was determined to allow the spontaneity of the Holy Spirit to move throughout a service. He enthusiastically encouraged music and singing in the church. Congregational response is not ritualized as much as it is personalized. Outside the worship life of United Methodists there are many social and educational events in

which they share. There are fewer ritualized activities, however, than with Roman Catholicism.

Authority for Christians, according to Wesley, comes from scripture, religious experience, church tradition, and human reason. These all must be kept in balance, but scripture is the ultimate authority (Kerr, 1975).

For Methodists, there are two purposes served by Christian burial in addition to disposing of the body. The first is to console the bereaved. This comes primarily through reading scripture. Congregational singing and recitation of psalms or creeds are also used for this purpose. The second purpose of a Christian funeral is to commend the deceased to God by giving thanks for the life that has been lived (White, 1976).

Funerals of church members should be held in the sanctuary. Music is an important aspect of the service. The funeral would likely include a sermon, prayers, hymns or anthems, recitation of the Apostle's Creed, and scripture. Both sermon and prayer would emphasize the personal nature of religious experience. The minister would pray "as he is moved" (Book of Worship, 1964, p. 38).

The Reformed Church in America

"Reformed" is a designation for all churches influenced by John Calvin. The origins of the Reformed tradition are European (Swiss, French, and German) and began early in the 16th century. Later in that century Dutch Reformed churches were organized in the Netherlands. In 1628 some Dutch Reformed people settled in the New World

and the denomination of Reformed Church in America had its beginnings (Hesselink, 1983).

The Reformed Church in America is considered semi-liturgical. Worship is dignified so there is an orderliness but it is centered on the Biblical word so that it is meaningful. The minister's relationship with the congregation is more important than a liturgical expression. However, informality does not result in emotionalism in the Reformed church. This denomination regards itself as moderate in every aspect. The Bible is the ultimate authority. Neither the church nor her tradition has more importance than the Biblical word (Ridder, 1957).

Worship for the Reformed Church in America is the time to encounter God's greatness and acknowledge God's worth. This is the opportunity for people to articulate their faith and through ritual to express the patterns of life that provide them meaning (Esther & Bruggink, 1987). Worship is based on hearing the word read and preached. Although there are expected behaviors associated with the worship life in the Reformed church, this varies significantly from one congregation to another. Methodical and logical thinking is stressed while the use of ritual is minimized in this denomination.

The Reformed church highly suggests that a funeral be held in the church, preferably at a time when many of the congregation can be present. The order of worship for Christian burial follows the regular Sunday order of worship. This includes a votum, prayer of confession, assurance of pardon, lessons, sermon, confession of faith, and prayers. Participation by the congregation is encouraged

through the prayers and recitations of the confession of faith (Esther & Bruggink, 1987).

Funeral Rituals in American Faith Communities

Funerals around the world are based on a wide variety of customs. In America, even with its diversity of people and ethnicity, there is an amazing degree of homogeneity in funeral customs (Huntington & Metcalf, 1979). Almost 80% of the funerals in America include embalming, public viewing, and a religious service. In such a diverse society, it seems odd that there is such uniformity. Two explanations may explain this inconsistency. First, economic interests led morticians to become professionals as they began to meet all the needs a family would have after a death. Assuring families that they could manage all the after-death details, funeral directors assumed many responsibilities earlier provided by friends and other family. Secondly, the desire to control emotional responses made the funeral process more antiseptic. Embalming a body prevents the process of decay and putrescence. By holding off the visible decomposition of a body, the reality of death can be held off for some time. Considered a service to people, this actually fosters an unhealthy avoidance of death.

Farrell (1980) claimed that the professionalization of funeral directors signaled the shift from having friends, family members, and clergy help in grief to allowing morticians to manage these experiences. Not only did they take care of the body and container for the body, morticians began to control funeral procedures and

build places for funerals to be held. This institutionalization of funeral services took place gradually between 1850 and 1920, but was marked significantly by the beginning of the National Funeral Directors Association in 1882. One of the most bitter outbursts against this trend came in 1963 by Mitford in The American Way of Death. Mitford wrote that funeral directors had developed an entirely new mythology about death in America. The new mythology was created solely to justify the funeral industry. Tenets of this funeral mythology were based on the public wanting a traditional American service that would certainly allow for a good memory picture of the deceased. Mitford vehemently claimed that the sophisticated, smooth directors who encourage buying beautifully carved and polished caskets with satin lining to hold an embalmed life-like body which will be carried by an expensive limousine parade have nothing to do with American tradition. American tradition, she maintained, is a pine box being carried to the grave by friends. Mitford also claimed that the emerging funeral business wanted to believe they were meeting the needs of the people when, in fact, they had (through publicity) simultaneously created and filled the needs of the people. Most people had begun making funeral arrangements relying on the sole expertise of the morticians.

Nichols (J. Nichols & Nichols, 1975) wrote from the vantage point of a funeral director. Participating in the acts after death of his father helped him move well through the grief process. Some of these simple acts were lifting his father from the hospital bed to the mortuary cot, writing the obituary, notifying the cemetery,

tucking the body into the casket, and closing the casket. After the funeral he carried the casket to the grave, helped to lower it into the hole, and shoveled the dirt himself. All of these duties--including dressing the dead body--were difficult for Nichols, but they provided ways to feel the agony. The shock and disbelief of the situation were accepted through the process of doing active work. This, he claimed, is what the funeral is supposed to do. Emotional and intellectual acceptance need to begin through the funeral arrangements. Participating in helping to prepare the body helps move people to the place they are willing to give up that body. However, most people do not have the advantage of being able to do this for their loved one.

A recent shift in response to the commercialization of funerals is for people to immediately dispose of the body and not have a funeral with friends and family members present. This, according to J. Nichols and Nichols (1975), may lead to delayed or avoided grief. Death in American society seems to be an intruder. Youth are revered and elderly people are put into institutions. Death is understood as tragic. Therefore, funeral directors have been allowed to act as functionaries and given permission to do the death work. This removes people from any affiliation with the subject. Though not supported by data, Nichols stated the belief that more active participation in funeral arrangements by the family will alleviate this dangerous trend of giving responsibility to an agent and denying the griever a realistic dealing with death. He considered it a privilege to have the duties of taking care of his

father's body and would like others to find the appropriateness in more active participation.

The discussion about worthiness of funerals extends into the faith communities. Education about the need and reasoning for certain practices would be helpful. Mourning rituals give the community a sense of solidarity and the opportunity to openly vent emotion (Cassem, 1981). The funeral does not create human responses but allows and provides opportunity for the expression of them. The greatest response at these times is for people to feel kinship within sorrow.

Disposition of the Body

Viewing the body of the deceased can be seen as barbaric and unsophisticated. It has been shown, however, to be the impetus for people to vent their emotion and provide a climate in which they can mourn (Raether, 1976). Christians in the past have viewed the body for 3 days. This allows people to grip reality rather than flee from it. Sedating emotions, or asking people not to feel, shields them from grief. The presence of the lifeless body forces griever to move to their emotional core and makes them very aware of the reality of death of their loved one (Jackson, 1959).

Another ritual having to do with the presence of the body is the carrying of it. Using large body muscles moves an intellectual experience into a physical one. The physical experience will be translated then into an emotional one (Irion, 1981). People may cognitively know that a loved one has died, but still not be feeling

it. The actual carrying of the casket or walking behind the casket in a processional helps to make that connection (Jackson, 1975). Another reason for including this as a part of the funeral ritual is that more people have opportunity to do something helpful. The sense of solidarity that is created within the community is also strong if several friends and family members are given the task of carrying the casket or processing behind it.

Fulton (1981) found the trend toward immediate disposition of the body without viewing to have an adverse effect on grief adjustment. Greater hostility, increased use of sedatives, and lower recall of the deceased were discovered in people who chose an untraditional funeral with no viewing.

Irion (1981) wrote about the two functions of ceremonialized patterns marking death which are found in most cultures. The first function is to separate the dead from the living. The second is to assist mourners in their adjustment. The funeral is a critical point because it is the time (even though short) when this restructuring begins. Though most grieverers are still in the shock stages, they often begin the work stage of grief at this time. They don't entirely leave the protective shock stage, but go back and forth for weeks (Bugin, 1977). The presence of the body does not lend itself to disguising the reality of death. No matter how life-like the mortician has been able to present the deceased, it is clear that life is gone from the body. This, in itself, will allow mourners to release their feelings rather than masquerading them in unreality.

Emotional behavior varies from culture to culture. The consistency is that people do not react to death unemotionally. Rosenblatt (1975) found that overt anger and aggression occurs frequently in societies where ritual specialists such as funeral directors have something to do with the disposition of the body. The extreme of this, however, where mourners have nothing to do with the deceased's body causes the grief to be locked inside and the natural grief process is stalled. Determination of the appropriate amount of involvement is the secret key. Studies to interpret the involvement level would be helpful for griever.

Properly taking care of the dead body was the reason for the Japanese origins of the wake. They have a custom of bathing the dead body to remove the evil spirits. For the same reason the body could not be left inside the house but had to be placed in the yard outside. To protect it from wild animals, family members stayed up to watch the body throughout the time of night (Kübler-Ross, 1975).

Actually doing some of the shoveling of dirt is another way the community can feel they are participating in a loving act toward the deceased. Cremation often isn't considered as final as lowering the body into the ground. It may be more aesthetic and economical but working with the body may be more important for the expression of grief (Gorer, 1965).

There are subtle and open attempts to move people away from the use of wakes, funerals, and burials. In certain cities in Ontario the funeral procession is outlawed (Cassem, 1981). Although this is undoubtedly a traffic concern, there is a clear message to the

changing of cultural norms. Cassem also wrote about Menominee, Michigan, where a graveside service must first be cleared through the mayor. Whatever the reason, the result will be a move away from traditional cultural values.

Visitation and Storytelling

A time set for telling tales about the deceased seems to be an integral part of many death rituals. Wakes provide opportunity for stories to be recounted about the dead person as well as time for tributes to be made to that person. This is the time the ritual following death (which may be very personal to the family) begins to have social consequences (Mandelbaum, 1959). This type of ritual serves two purposes. First, it solidifies a community. Telling stories calls up memories of a group of people. It gives them a forum for mutual remembrance and consideration. Secondly, this type of ritual validates the life of the deceased. This helps the community believe that the deceased will be remembered for the specialness which was lived (Rando, 1984).

Limited or no visitation diminishes the opportunities for a community to gather and support a mourner. Talking, storytelling, and visiting with others who knew the deceased puts the mourners in touch with a natural support group (Jackson, 1975).

Liturgy of Funerals

All three denominations to be studied (Roman Catholic, Reformed Church in America, and United Methodist) have liturgical forms for

their funerals. Churches in each denomination use their liturgies in varying degrees, although Roman Catholic churches have a stricter mandate to adhere to a specific liturgy. The priest or pastor usually determines the extent to which these will be used and the variance allowed.

Funeral rites provide clues of what a faith community believes about the supernatural. When these are known and anticipated, the mourners can find security in them. If they are always changing or unknown, they can be vehicles for intellectual understanding. However, at the time of deepest mourning, intellectual understanding is not essential. The need is for emotional support. Knowing the words and responses that will be said during a funeral gives needed stability (Mandelbaum, 1959).

Community Participation

Community participation in the funeral ritual is a means to show support to the griever. Allowing opportunity for a community to grieve is also a reason to encourage community participation in the funeral. It is best, therefore, to arrange a funeral at a time when the largest number of people may attend. Having those in attendance participate in unison readings, giving of eulogies, hymn singing, or responsive readings takes the funeral from a personal to a community experience (Irion, 1981).

After Funeral Rituals

Many communities celebrate a meal after the funeral. This provides a socializing experience and is often called the meal of recuperation (Cassem, 1975). Again, it is a means of showing community solidarity to the prime mourner. But it also allows the community at large to feel their solidarity. The theme of this meal is that life must go on. Eating sustains the living and gives energy for life. This meal, then, is a way of reinforcing the concept that the life of the community is going to proceed even with the loss of the deceased (Kübler-Ross, 1975).

Realistically, readjustment does not take place immediately. The celebrative meal after the funeral is only the beginning of realization for the mourner that life will go on. Rando (1984) claimed that funerals occur too early in the mourning process in American faith communities. However, they should not be postponed but have other rites added to the present ones. Other rituals to show the community solidarity around the basic griever are important.

One of the ways this is done is in "final" death ceremonies which may occur weeks, months, or even years after a death. Final ceremonies have the advantage of indicating a time line to the bereaved and to the public. They set a parameter of expectation. Like the Kotas of South India, when mourners know they are expected to be moving through the final stages of grief at a certain time, they are able to do so appropriately. Rosenblatt et al., (1976)

found that in 78 societies around the world where final ceremonies were present, prolonged grief was less likely to be present.

Closely-Related Research

Bolton and Camp (1986-87) endeavored to find a relationship between pre-, during-, and postfuneral rituals and the facilitation of grief work. Fifty widowed individuals were interviewed about their participation in rituals before, during, and after the funerals of their spouses. Each participant was also administered two measures of grief adjustment (the Affect-Balance Scale and the Attitude Inventory). The Affect-Balance Scale tests psychological well-being for older individuals. The Attitude Inventory was developed to measure adjustment. The inventory consists of eight components (health, work, finances, religion, usefulness, friendship, happiness, and family), with seven questions about each component. Prefuneral rituals identified by the widowed individuals included placing public notice of the death, selecting the casket, previewing the deceased, selecting the type of funeral service, selecting the grave marker, and having a prefuneral rosary or prayer service. Funeral rituals identified included having a religious service, having music at the ceremony, presenting a eulogy, and gathering with food after the service. The widowed individuals listed postfuneral rituals as receiving and acknowledging floral gifts, sympathy cards, and money gifts; sorting and disposing of the personal effects of the deceased; and making visits to the grave site.

Data analysis did not support the Bolton and Camp (1986-87) hypothesis that the degree of grieving was related to the amount of ritual practiced. The data did, however, indicate that postfuneral rituals were more clearly related to the attitudes (usefulness, health, happiness, and finances) delineated in the Attitude Inventory. Recommendation from this study was for clergy, counselors, and funeral directors to encourage postfuneral rituals.

Doka (1984-85) sought to determine the degree to which participation in funeral rituals helped grief adjustment. Funeral rituals included selecting clergy, providing information for the eulogy, selecting music, and participating as pallbearers or readers. The sample was 50 people who were primary survivors. Of those studied, 44% were widows and 12% were widowers, while the others were primarily responsible for making funeral arrangements for a parent, child, or sibling. The hypothesis that persons who participated in funeral rituals were more likely to exhibit grief adjustment was not confirmed.

Carey (1979-80) interviewed 41 widowers and 78 widows to determine if gender related to grief adjustment. He also sought to determine the relationship of anticipatory grief to adjustment. Carey developed an eight-item self-report measure of adjustment and depression called the Adjustment Scale. This is a quantitative measure to locate a person on a continuum between adjustment and depression. Results indicated that widowers were significantly better adjusted than widows. This difference was maintained even when respondents were broken down by income level, education, age, and

amount of forewarning of death. Widows who had been forewarned about their husband's death had a higher level of adjustment than those who did not.

Summary

The impact of varying denominational rituals upon the grieving process of widows is unknown. Practices in one denomination might foster grief adjustment better than those in another denomination. Therefore, three mainline Christian denominations, which have varying practices, were chosen to study this issue.

In this chapter a review of literature about ritual and grief has been presented. Myths and rituals of many cultures were delineated specifically as they relate to death. Short synopses of three major Christian denominations' history and death rituals were included. The three stages of grief were explored and related to Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Several grieving rituals of faith communities were presented and discussed.

Results of research on grief show that postfuneral rituals were related to attitudes of grief adjustment, that widowers were better adjusted than widows, and that forewarning of a husband's death increased a widow's adjustment. No evidence has been found to link funeral, prefuneral, or postfuneral rituals (related to faith communities) with grief adjustment. Research to indicate that grief adjustment was higher in denominational groups was not found.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence denominational rituals have on grief adjustment. Christian denominations emphasize various rituals. Those practiced within one denomination might foster adjustment to grief better than others.

Within this chapter, hypotheses for the study will be presented. The independent variable of three Christian denominations will be identified. The dependent variables of ritual involvement and grief adjustment, will also be identified. Instrumentation and data collection procedures will be presented. The chapter will conclude with data analyses procedures.

Hypotheses

Given what the literature says about the grief process, the need for ritualization to help people through critical stages of that process, and the varying amounts of ritual among denominations, it seems reasonable to test three hypotheses.

Research Hypothesis 1: The amount of ritualistic participation by widows after the death of their husbands is related to the widows' denominational affiliation.

Research Hypothesis 2: Adjustment to grief will vary according to the widows' denominational affiliation.

Research Hypothesis 3: The relationship between widows' ritual participation and grief adjustment will differ according to the widows' denomination.

Identification and Description
of the Independent Variable

Three denominations of Christianity were chosen to study this issue. The three--the Roman Catholic church, the United Methodist church, and the Reformed Church in America--share some of the informal rituals and activities at the time of death of their members. There are differences in practice and liturgy that separate them from each other. On a continuum, the Roman Catholic church uses ritual the most, the Reformed Church in America uses it the least, and the United Methodist church is between the others.

The independent variable, church denomination, cannot be manipulated. Those chosen for this study were not asked to join a particular congregation. In fact they were already active participants within a specific denomination. The study, therefore, would be one of ex post facto research.

Worldwide, there is great variance in the size of the three denominations. The Roman Catholic church claims 18% of the world population or 60% of all Christians (Coxill & Grubb, 1967). The Reformed Church in America is the smallest of the three denominations. There are over 47.5 million confirmed members of the Roman Catholic church in the United States, 9.5 million United Methodists, and only 211,000 Reformed Church in America members (Quinn,

Anderson, Bradley, Goetting, and Shriver, 1982). Pooling just these three denominations makes up 57 million church members. The Roman Catholics are 83% of that pool, United Methodists are 16%, and Reformed are 0.37%. In considering the almost 62,000 congregations of those denominations, however, the United Methodists have 62%, Roman Catholics have 36%, and Reformed have 1.4%. Therefore, proportionately the United Methodist and Reformed church have more congregations but they must be smaller in constituent membership than Roman Catholic congregations.

In western Michigan those variances lessen because of the high concentration of the Reformed church. In Kalamazoo County there are 14 Roman Catholic congregations with 25,360 members, 18 Reformed church congregations with 8,039 members, and 21 United Methodist congregations with 9,038 members (Quinn et al., 1982). Roman Catholics comprise 60% of the membership of the three denominations; but the number of churches is more equally distributed with the United Methodists having 40%, Reformed church 34%, and Roman Catholics 26%. The field study population was sought from these churches.

In 12 western Michigan counties there are 130 Roman Catholic congregations with 190,643 members, 114 Reformed churches with 67,948 members, and 189 United Methodist churches with 54,326 members (Quinn et al., 1982). Counties considered are Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Cass, Calhoun, Kent, Muskegon, Newago, Ottawa, St. Joseph, and VanBuren. Again Roman Catholics comprise 60% of the membership of the three denominations. The United Methodists have 44% of the congregations, Roman Catholics have 33%, and Reformed

churches have 26%. Members of these churches in western Michigan were used for the research population. These statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Denominational Statistics

Denomination	Number of churches	Confirmed members
United States of America		
Roman Catholic	22,348	47,502,152
Reformed church	889	211,581
United Methodist	38,465	9,534,803
Western Michigan		
Roman Catholic	130	190,643
Reformed church	114	67,948
United Methodist	189	54,326
Kalamazoo County		
Roman Catholic	14	25,360
Reformed church	18	8,039
United Methodist	21	9,038

Note. Data are from Churches and Church Membership in the U.S., 1980 by B. Quinn, H. Anderson, M. Bradley, P. Goetting, and P. Shriver (Eds.), 1982, Atlanta, GA: Glenmary Research Center.

Contaminants: Gender and Time

Research has shown a different adjustment rate for widowers and widows. Carey (1979-80) found that widowers were better adjusted after a period of grief than widows during the same period of time. Women (especially in the past) have built their lives and identity around their husbands. Upon the death of the husband, the wife has more radical change to effect in order to find normalcy. Understanding finances and maintenance of the home are often heavy adjustments to the widow. A widower usually has fewer adjustments in this area. Because of the likelihood of better grief adjustment for widowers, it was determined that gender was a contaminant. Therefore, only widows were used for the study.

Studies have shown that major grief work takes place during the first year following a death (Carey, 1977). Concern increases for widows who have not made significant adjustment after that time. In order to standardize the length of widowhood of responders and not violate the deepest grieving time for them, those sought for the study had been widows for 13-16 months.

Identification and Description of the Dependent Variables

The dependent variables were ritual involvement and grief adjustment. Measurements were sought to determine if widows were involved (and how much) in specific rituals during the early stages of their grief. Determination of their adjustment to grief 13-16 months after their husband's death was also sought.

Adjustment to Grief

The Adjustment Scale is an eight-item, self-report measure of adjustment-depression. Developed by Carey (1979-80), this scale is a quantitative measure which can locate a person on a continuum between healthy adjustment in grief and a level of depression.

Responses are scored on a 3-point scale with higher scores indicating better adjustment. The Adjustment Scale showed a high degree of internal consistency using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 test for reliability ($r = .86$). Validity evidence is restricted to comparison with the Bornstein, Clayton, Halikas, Maurice, and Robins (1973) measure of depression. Applying the Bornstein et al. measure to a particular sample, 26% of the population were depressed. Using the Adjustment Scale with the same sample, 25% were found to be depressed (Carey, 1977). The Adjustment Scale may be found in Appendix B. Scoring for this instrument may be found in Appendix C.

Involvement in Rituals

An instrument to gain information about the level of participation in rituals immediately following a spouse's death, during the funeral, and following the funeral was written. The rituals defined by the instrument are not related to matters of faith, but are related to social and community participation. Therefore, while developed specifically for this study, the instrument should be transferable to the study of other faith communities and their use of ritual.

In creating the instrument that would collect information about the participation in ritual, three areas of concern needed to be addressed. The literature review indicated that specific acts of separation from the corpse, support shown from the community, and clearly ritualized expectations were helpful to griever. Therefore, the following Table of Specifications were used to develop the instrument which was to be called the Ritual Involvement Inventory.

1. Were there specific acts in which the people participated that involved them with the body and separation from the body?
2. Was there community interaction time designed to support them through these initial stages of grief?
3. Were there institutionally (church) designed acts to help them move through the time of death, funeral, and designated period of time after the funeral?

Development of Ritual Involvement Inventory

The Ritual Involvement Inventory was designed and then evaluated by a review board. A pilot test was done to determine if the inventory was understandable and would gain the information needed. Later a field test was run to check the feasibility and reliability of the project.

The inventory (Draft 1) evaluated by the review board is found in Appendix D. There were 13 specific questions in the inventory. These were separated into three types of rituals: those at the time of death, those during the funeral, and those after the funeral.

The inventory (Draft 2) generated after input from the review board is found in Appendix E. This inventory had 18 questions. The three specific types of ritual (at time of death, during funeral, and after funeral) remained the same. This latter inventory was used for the pilot test, field test, and main project.

Approval to collect data from widows was sought and secured from the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. A copy of the approval letter is in Appendix A.

Expert Review

A review panel of six people was asked to evaluate the instrument. The review board included pastors of the three denominations studied, a hospital chaplain, a grief counselor, and a pastor of a denomination not in the study. The hospital chaplain was included because of his experience in counseling grief stricken families. The chaplain is an ordained United Methodist clergyman. A lay grief counselor was included in the review board because of her association and work with people experiencing grief. An ordained pastor of an American Baptist congregation was added to this board because of his experience in church survey research.

Each of the review panel received a draft copy of the Ritual Involvement Inventory at least one week before an intensive interview was scheduled. The inventory was divided into three areas: rituals immediately after death, rituals during the funeral and committal services, and rituals after the funeral services. The review board members were asked to read each item of the inventory

with the following questions in mind:

1. Are these rituals cross-denominational?
2. Will they be adaptable to many denominational perspectives?
3. Do these rituals provide specific acts in which people involve themselves with the body and separation from the body?
4. Do these rituals give community interaction time designed to support the people through the initial stages of grief?
5. Do these rituals provide institutionally (church) designed acts to help the people move through the time of death, the funeral, and a designated period of time after the funeral?
6. Are these items clearly written?
7. Are there other rituals, perhaps specific to your denomination or experience, that could be included in the inventory?

Major changes made to the inventory were words or phrases that seemed to be denominationally specific. Several reviewers also indicated that some expressions would not be understood by the laity of the study population (e.g., order of worship was substituted for liturgy). Five items were added to the inventory. The additional items asked about calling hours, opportunity to help plan the funeral, hymn singing, presence of the corpse, and involvement in designating use of memorial gifts. Each of these was an idea offered by more than one reviewer. Most of the items were reworded for clarity. Members of the review board provided valuable, generalized information about their experiences with funerals and grieving as well as input about the inventory.

Pilot Test

Eight widows were asked to read through the Ritual Involvement Inventory. Church membership of the widows included United Methodist, Roman Catholic, Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, and American Baptist. The range of time that they had been widows was 7 months to 4 years.

The inventory (Draft 2) was given to the widows individually. The intent of this procedure was to determine if the inventory was clear and could be answered without help or hesitation. The widows were not given detailed information about the project before they read through the inventory. However, after completing the instrument, several of the women asked questions about the research. Some were interested in rituals in other congregations.

All the widows found the inventory clear and easy to complete. No changes, therefore, were made to the Ritual Involvement Inventory after the pilot test.

Field Test

Senior pastors of 35 churches in Kalamazoo County were contacted by letter to participate in the field test. These pastors of Roman Catholic, United Methodist, or Reformed churches were asked if they would be willing to share the names of widows whose husbands had died between November 1, 1987, and March 1, 1988 (13-16 months prior to the field test). Copies of the Ritual Involvement Inventory and Adjustment Scale were included in the letters to the

pastors. Stamped return postcards for the pastors' responses were included with the letters. Although 21 pastors responded, only 8 of them knew of widows in their parishes who met the time criterion.

The pastors who had widows for the study were contacted again. The widows' names and addresses were sought. A cover letter which would be sent to the widows with the instruments was also sent to the pastor. Approval and signature of the cover letter were sought from the pastor. There were 15 widows' names generated from the eight pastors.

The 15 widows then received the Ritual Involvement Inventory and the grief Adjustment Scale. The cover letter from the pastor and a stamped return envelope were also included. The instruments were color coded (Roman Catholic--yellow, United Methodist--pink, and Reformed church--green) so the respondents' denominational differences could be identified.

Thirteen of the widows responded. Only 8 of them completed each item of the Ritual Inventory, and 11 responded to each item of the Adjustment Scale. Reliability scores were determined for both the Adjustment Scale and the Ritual Involvement Inventory. Four items of the Ritual Involvement Inventory had zero variance. All of the widows participated in those specific rituals. The zero variance of these items can be interpreted that most widows within the church are involved in at least these rituals. Specifically, those rituals include meeting with the pastor or priest, having visitation with friends, helping to plan the funeral, and having a meal or reception after the service. These four items were maintained in

the inventory because of their perceived importance in the literature or the review board.

There were two items with negative item-total correlation. Item IIIb was whether a widow knew of an expected time of mourning. The discrimination index for this was $-.42$. Item IIg was whether the body or ashes were placed in the grave during the committal service. Discrimination index for this was $-.15$. These items measured widow's expectations and separation from the deceased body. Both are important aspects of grief work (Irion, 1981). Therefore, both items were retained as previously worded, even though the item statistics indicated a problem.

The Ritual Involvement Inventory was written on both sides of one sheet of paper. Two widows did not complete the back side. Directions were adjusted to indicate the necessity of completing both sides.

Overall reliability for the Ritual Involvement Inventory was $.69$. Reliability analysis may be found in Table 2.

Reliability for the Adjustment Scale was $.61$. Using the score written for this instrument, 23% of the widows were depressed. This corresponds with 25% found with a sample used by Carey (1979-80) as he developed the instrument. Item Ga4 showed a negative item-total correlation of $-.55$. This was the one item that was positively stated and, therefore, scored inversely. Item Ga6 showed a negative item-total correlation of $-.07$. This is considered indistinguishable from zero. No changes were made to the Adjustment Scale

Table 2
Reliability Analysis of Ritual Involvement Inventory
($\underline{n} = 8$)

	Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Item-total correlation
1.	Ia--Meet pastor	1.00	.00	.00
2.	Ib--Calling hours	.88	.35	.67
3.	Ic--Visitation	1.00	.00	.00
4.	Id--View body	.75	.46	.89
5.	Ie--Plan funeral	1.00	.00	.00
6.	If--Prayer service	.63	.52	.49
7.	IIa--Order of worship	.88	.35	.37
8.	IIb--Hymns	.38	.52	.31
9.	IIc--Congregation part.	.38	.52	.31
10.	IIId--Cry	.63	.52	.71
11.	IIe--Body present	.50	.53	.63
12.	IIIf--Proclamation	.50	.53	.63
13.	IIg--Grave	.38	.52	-.15
14.	IIh--Dirt, ashes	.25	.46	.23
15.	IIIa--Meal	1.00	.00	.00
16.	IIIb--Mourning time	.63	.52	-.42
17.	IIIc--Year's service	.25	.46	.12
18.	IIId--Memorial gifts	.63	.52	.09

Note. Statistics for 18 items: mean = 11.62, variance = 9.70
standard deviation = 3.11, alpha = .69.

because of its use in previous research. Reliability analyses may be found in Table 3.

Table 3
Reliability Analysis of Adjustment Scale
($n = 11$)

Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Item-total correlation
1. Ga1--Lonely	2.09	.83	.80
2. Ga2--Go to pieces	2.54	.82	.44
3. Ga3--If you died	2.73	.65	.28
4. Ga4--At peace	1.27	.65	-.55
5. Ga5--Depressed	2.18	.60	.64
6. Ga6--Depression	2.64	.81	-.07
7. Ga7--Cry	2.27	.90	.45
8. Ga8--Futile	2.45	.93	.69

Note. Statistics for 8 items: mean = 18.18, variance = 10.56, standard deviation = 3.25, and alpha = .61.

Data Collection and General Procedures

Widows (whose husbands died 13-16 months prior to the study) from three Christian denominations were sought for this study. Lists of widows were sought from the 209 pastors of Roman Catholic, United Methodist, and Reformed Church in America congregations in western Michigan. An initial request was sent to 79 Roman Catholic priests, 61 United Methodist pastors, and 69 Reformed Church in

America pastors (Appendix G). Copies of both instruments were sent to the clergy so they would clearly understand what the widows would later receive. A cover letter that would be sent to the widows was included in the pastors' letter for their signature (Appendix H).

As widows' names were secured, both instruments were sent to them with the cover letter from their pastor. Widows were not contacted again so there would be less intrusion on an especially difficult time period for these grieverers.

Ministers who did not respond were written again and asked to participate (Appendix I). The 13-16 month period had to be adjusted for the lapse of time between groups of responders. It was important that widows had equal lengths of grieving periods before answering the questionnaires. Telephone calls were made to pastors of each denomination who had not responded to either request. Seven months following the initial mailing data collection was suspended.

Data Analyses

Religious communities practice certain rites because of underlying myths that have supported their history and cultural backgrounds. Even within Christendom, there is great variety of ritual among denominational groups. Of the three denominations studied, Reformed Church in America is the least ritually complex, while the Roman Catholic church is the most ritually complex.

Grieving is a process of dealing with a great loss. Ceremonialized patterns have developed throughout the world to assist mourners in adjustment to the loss.

Widows' participation in ritual and how this impacts grief adjustment are the issues of this study. Three hypotheses tested are:

Research Hypothesis 1: The amount of ritualistic participation by widows after the death of their husbands is related to the widows' denominational affiliation.

Research Hypothesis 2: Adjustment to grief will vary according to the widows' denominational affiliation.

Research Hypothesis 3: The relationship between widows' ritual participation and grief adjustment will differ according to the widows' denomination.

Data for both dependent variables, Adjustment Scale and Ritual Involvement Inventory, were measured on an interval scale. Scores on the Adjustment Scale could range from 8 to 24. Except for one question the answers were scored as 1 for yes, 2 for uncertain, and 3 for no. In the one exception the scoring was reversed so that larger numbers were always associated with greater adjustment. The Ritual Involvement Inventory has 18 items. Widows in the study indicated in which rituals they participated at the death of their husband. Therefore, scores could range from 0 to 18.

The independent variable, denominational affiliation, was based on a nominal scale.

The one-way analysis of variance was used to test for differences between means for the Research Hypotheses 1 and 2. Alpha was set at .05. Should there be significance in the ANOVA, further analysis was performed using the Tukey post hoc test.

A Pearson r correlation was used to test for relationship in the Research Hypothesis 3.

Summary

Discussion in this chapter centered on: (a) identification and description of the independent variable, (b) contaminants of gender and time, (c) identification and description of the dependent variables, (d) data collection and general procedures, and (e) data analysis and hypotheses.

The independent variables were identified as involvement in the Roman Catholic church, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Methodist church. The population characteristics of each denomination in Michigan were given.

The design contaminants were identified as gender and time. Research was cited to indicate that widowers were more quickly adjusted in the grieving process than widows. Therefore, widowers were removed from consideration. Length of time from the death experience had to be standardized so that respondents would have had equal periods for grieving.

The dependent variables were identified and described. A grief Adjustment Scale was secured and a Ritual Involvement Inventory was written in order to gain the necessary information about widows' and widowers' grieving practices.

An expert review board and pilot test were run to alleviate problems in the Ritual Involvement Inventory. Procedures were explained in this chapter. Field test criteria were included to

explain its necessity and value.

The hypotheses and indication of data analysis procedure were included.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The findings of the research process described in Chapter III will be discussed in this chapter. First, the actual data collection procedures will be reported. Second, the response rate will be discussed. The data analysis and hypotheses test results will then be examined. Finally, the findings will be summarized.

The research hypotheses for this study are:

Research Hypothesis 1: The amount of ritualistic participation by widows after the death of their husbands is related to the widows' denominational affiliation.

Research Hypothesis 2: Adjustment to grief will vary according to the widows' denominational affiliation.

Research Hypothesis 3: The relationship between widows' ritual participation and grief adjustment will differ according to the widows' denomination.

In order to test the null Hypotheses 1 and 2, the mean score for dependent variables of ritual participation and grief adjustment were determined for each of the three denominations (the independent variable). A one-way analysis of variance was used to test for differences among the denominations on each of the two dependent variables.

The Pearson r correlation was used to test the relationship of grief adjustment and ritual participation in all of the denominations combined and then each one individually.

Data Collection Procedures and Response Rate

Collection of data was a two step process. Senior ministers of 209 churches in western Michigan were asked to provide names of widows in their congregation. The widows needed to be 13-16 months past the death of their husbands. The two instruments were included in the letter to the minister so the pastor would understand what the widows would receive. A cover letter for the pastor to sign (which would accompany a letter to the widow) and return was also included. The second step of the process was to ask widows (named by their pastors) to complete the instruments.

After the initial request to pastors, 37 responded with 34 widows' names. The remaining pastors (172) were contacted again by letter 5 months later. The 13-16 months period for their widows was shifted so that all the widows of the study would have similar history. Of these 172 pastors, 24 responded with 26 widows' names.

Telephone calls to a random sampling of five pastors in each denomination were then done to secure more names from pastors that had not responded. No widows' names were secured by this procedure. Therefore, neither a third mailing nor calls to others not responding was done.

Data collection was suspended 7 months after beginning. Of the 209 pastors contacted, 61 responded for an overall return rate of

29%. The response rate of pastors by denomination is included in Table 4.

The rate of return from the widows was high. Of the initial 34 widows, 26 responded by returning their instrument within 2 weeks after they had been sent to them. Out of the second pool of widows, 23 of the 26 responded. Of the 60 widows contacted, 49 responded for an overall return rate of 82%. All of the widows contacted from the Reformed Church of America responded with their instruments. The response rate by denomination is included in Table 4.

Unfortunately, nine of the widows did not complete every item of their instruments. Therefore, the sample (n) was 40.

An underlying assumption of ANOVA is homogeneity of variances. This is of minimal importance when sample sizes are equal. The sample sizes of this study are approximately 1:1:1.

Reliability for each of the dependent variables was computed following data collection. The ritual participation variable was identified as reliable with a Cronbach alpha of .72 (Table 5). Items Ia and Ic had negative item-total correlation. Item Ia asked whether the widow met with her pastor after her spouse's death, and Item Ic asked whether the widow viewed the body of her spouse after his death. The negative item-total correlation of $-.23$ (Ia) and $-.03$ (Ic) were unexpected because of the field study results of $.00$ for both items. The alpha was $.80$ for the grief adjustment variable (Table 6). Item Ga4 had a negative item-total correlation of $-.65$. This is the same item that had negative reliability in the field study. Both overall scores represent higher reliability than the

field test when alpha for ritual participation was .69 and alpha for grief adjustment was .61.

Table 4
Rate of Response From Pastors and Widows

	Roman Catholic	United Methodist	Reformed church
Pastor contact #1	79	61	69
Pastor response	13	12	12
Widows' names	17	11	6
Widows' response	13	7	6
Pastor contact #2	66	49	57
Pastor response	2	8	14
Widows' names	5	13	8
Widows' response	3	12	8
Pastor contact #3	5	5	5
Widows' names	0	0	0
Totals:			
Pastor responses	15	20	26
	19.0%	32.8%	37.7%
Widows' responses	16	19	14
	72.7%	79.2%	100.0%

Table 5
Reliability Analysis of Ritual Involvement Inventory
($n = 34$)

	Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Item-total correlation
1.	Ia--Meet pastor	.88	.32	-.23
2.	Ib--Calling hours	.91	.29	.25
3.	Ic--Visitation	.79	.41	-.03
4.	Id--View body	.91	.46	.21
5.	Ie--Plan funeral	.97	.17	.23
6.	If--Prayer service	.50	.51	.36
7.	Ila--Order of worship	.88	.33	.59
8.	Ilb--Hymns	.58	.50	.18
9.	Ilc--Congregation	.44	.50	.16
10.	Ild--Cry	.76	.43	.17
11.	Ile--Body present	.94	.23	.30
12.	Ilf--Processional	.62	.49	.68
13.	Ilg--Grave	.41	.50	.34
14.	Ilh--Dirt, ashes	.11	.32	.41
15.	IIla--Meal	.85	.36	.54
16.	IIlb--Mourning time	.32	.47	.37
17.	IIlc--Year's service	.35	.49	.53
18.	IIld--Memorial gifts	.65	.49	.38

Note. Statistics for 18 items: mean = 11.91, variance = 9.30, standard deviation = 3.05, alpha = .72.

Table 6
Reliability Analysis of Adjustment Scale
($n = 39$)

Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Item-total correlation
1. Ga1--Lonely	2.05	.83	.72
2. Ga2--Go to pieces	2.38	.88	.84
3. Ga3--If you died	2.46	.88	.76
4. Ga4--At peace	1.74	.88	-.65
5. Ga5--Depressed	2.07	.84	.73
6. Ga6--Depression	2.46	.85	.75
7. Ga7--Cry	2.20	.89	.69
8. Ga8--Futile	2.30	.89	.69

Note. Statistics for 8 items: mean = 17.69, variance = 20.27, standard deviation = 4.50, and alpha = .80.

Findings and Discussion of Hypothesis 1

Research Hypothesis 1 is concerned with the difference of ritual participation (the dependent variable) among widows of three Christian denominations (the independent variable). The research hypothesis is that there would be significant differences when the data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA with alpha at the .05 level. This was performed through the General Linear Model (GLM) program of SAS (SAS Institute, 1985). The null hypothesis is that there would be no difference in the mean score for the variable of ritual participation among the three groups: Roman Catholic, United

Methodist, and Reformed Church in America.

The analysis of data for Hypothesis 1 resulted in an F of 3.39 with 2 and 37 degrees of freedom. The probability was .04, as noted in Table 7. Since the probability of F was smaller than alpha at .05, the null hypothesis will be rejected. Descriptive data concerning Hypothesis 1 are presented in Table 8.

Table 7
ANOVA for Hypothesis 1: Ritual Participation
and All Denominations

Source	<u>SS</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	Prob. of <u>F</u>
Main effects	50.54	2	25.27	3.39	.04*
Residual	275.44	37	7.44		
Total	325.98	39			

* $p < .05$.

Table 8
Descriptive Data for Hypothesis 1: Ritual
Participation and All Denominations

Dependent variable	Independent variable	<u>n</u>	Mean
Ritual participation	Roman Catholic	13	13.08
	United Methodist	15	10.40
	Reformed church	12	11.92

A Tukey post hoc analysis indicates significant differences between the ritual participation means of Roman Catholic widows and United Methodist widows. Mean scores for Roman Catholic widows were higher than mean scores for United Methodist widows. This discovery supports the a priori definitions that Roman Catholics participate in more ritual than United Methodists.

With the rejection of the null hypothesis and further post hoc testing, it is found that there was a significant difference in the level of ritual participation between Roman Catholic and United Methodist widows.

Findings and Discussion of Hypothesis 2

Research Hypothesis 2 is concerned with the difference of grief adjustment (the dependent variable) among widows of three Christian denominations (the independent variable). The research hypothesis suggested there would be significant differences when the data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA with alpha set at the .05 level. The General Linear Model (SAS Institute, 1985) was used for the one-way ANOVA. The null hypothesis is that there would be no difference in the mean score for the variable of grief adjustment among the three groups: Roman Catholic, United Methodist, and Reformed Church of America.

The analysis of data for Hypothesis 2 resulted in an F of .71 with 2 and 37 degrees of freedom. The probability was .50 as noted in Table 9. Since the probability of F was larger than alpha at .05, the null hypothesis may not be rejected at this time. Thus,

there is no evidence with the current sample to support Research Hypothesis 2. Retaining the null means that there is no significant difference among widows of different denominational groups in how well adjusted they were to their grief. Descriptive data concerning Hypothesis 2 are presented in Table 10.

Table 9
ANOVA for Hypothesis 2: Grief Adjustment
and All Denominations

Source	<u>SS</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	Prob. of <u>F</u>
Main effects	28.48	2	14.24	0.71	.50
Residual	742.29	37	20.06		
Total	770.77	39			

Table 10
Descriptive Data for Hypothesis 2: Grief
Adjustment and All Denominations

Dependent variable	Independent variable	<u>n</u>	Mean
Grief adjustment	Roman Catholic	13	18.15
	United Methodist	15	16.60
	Reformed church	12	18.50

Findings and Discussion of Hypothesis 3

Research Hypothesis 3 is concerned with the relationship of widows' ritual participation and their grief adjustment within their denominational grouping. Using a Pearson r correlation coefficient, the research hypothesis is that a significant correlation between ritual participation and grief adjustment would be found within the denominational groups of widows. This was performed through the Pearson r program of SAS (SAS Institute, 1985). The null hypothesis is that there would be a correlation of zero between ritual participation and grief adjustment within the denominational groups.

The analysis of data for Hypothesis 3 resulted in an overall correlation of $-.28$, probability of $r = .08$, as noted in Table 11. Alpha was set at $.05$. When the groups were collapsed there is a minor negative correlation between the amount of ritual in which all the widows participated and their adjustment to grief, but it is not a significant finding.

Analysis of data for each of the three denominations was also done. Table 11 presents results and descriptive data concerning widows of each of the denominations. With alpha set at $.05$, the Pearson r for Roman Catholic widows was $-.21$. The null hypothesis would be retained indicating that no significant correlation was found between ritual participation and grief adjustment among Roman Catholic widows. The Pearson r for United Methodist widows was $-.69$. The null hypothesis would be rejected on the basis of alpha set at $.05$. This indicates significant negative correlation was

Table 11
Pearson r for Hypothesis 3: Ritual Participation
and Grief Adjustment

	<u>n</u>	<u>df</u>	Mean	<u>r</u>	Prob. of <u>r</u>
All denominations	40	38		-.28	.080
Ritual participation			11.73		
Grief adjustment			17.68		
Roman Catholic	13	11		-.21	.490
Ritual participation			13.08		
Grief adjustment			18.15		
United Methodist	15	13		-.69	.004*
Ritual participation			10.40		
Grief adjustment			16.60		
Reformed church	12	10		.09	.780
Ritual participation			11.92		
Grief adjustment			18.50		

* $p < .05$.

found between ritual participation and grief adjustment among United Methodist widows. The Pearson r for widows of the Reformed church was .09. Alpha was again set at .05. The null hypothesis would be retained indicating that no significant correlation was found between ritual participation and grief adjustment among Reformed church widows.

Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of data collection and analysis. Reliability measures showed that both instruments of the variables were reliable.

Analysis of the data collected using one-way ANOVA resulted in the rejection of null Hypothesis 1. A Tukey post hoc analysis indicated significant differences between ritual participation means of Roman Catholic and United Methodist widows. This finding supports the a priori definition that Roman Catholic widows would be more involved in ritual than United Methodist widows.

Analysis of the data collected using one-way ANOVA resulted in the retention of the null Hypothesis 2. No post hoc analysis was performed because there were no significant differences found among the widows of the three denominations regarding their adjustment to grief.

Analysis of the data collected using a Pearson r for Hypothesis 3 resulted in a significant negative correlation among United Methodist widows regarding ritual participation and grief adjustment. This small sample indicates that the more ritual involvement for Methodist widows meant less adjustment in their grief. This is the most unusual discovery of the study because it is in direct opposition to the major hypothesis. No significant correlation of ritual participation and grief adjustment was found for either Roman Catholic or Reformed church widows.

The next and final chapter discusses conclusions that can be made as a result of the data collection and analyses.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter an attempt will be made to synthesize the different aspects of the research study. The rationale for the research will be reviewed, followed by a discussion of the procedures for data collection and their limitations. The research findings, as well as the limitations of the study, will be delineated. The possibility of future research will be explored.

Rationale for Research

The use of ritual to help people pass through critical periods of life spans all ages and cultures. Although rituals vary greatly among societies, their fundamental purpose of providing assurance, comfort, meaning, and community support during critical (joyous or sad) times is the same.

A review of the literature indicated that ritual often provides the template of expected behavior. The meaning of any experience does not rest in the ritual, but ritual outlines behavior so people are directed to the significance of a situation.

Grieving the death of one's spouse can be one of the most devastating experiences of life. Rituals have long been used to help people ease the pain of this period and reintegrate into the social structure.

This study focused on specific rituals in which people affiliated with the church might participate. The church is one of the main sustainers and interpreters of ritual in our society. Many of the ways the church educates through ritual are not interpreted as such. Though not often considered a ritual, hymn singing is an activity that passes on tradition, allows the expression of emotion, and draws people together. Widows were asked in this research if hymns were sung at their husband's funeral. This is only one way that a set and ritualized act serves to help people through difficult times. There are many other ways the church uses habitual behavior patterns to reinforce people during critical passages of their lives.

Often the church community and society are unaware of the important part ritual can play in helping people celebrate or grieve. This study attempted to find the relationship of rituals at the time of grief and the way in which widows handled their grieving process. If this could be adequately shown, perhaps the church would deliberately teach and use rituals to an even greater extent. The benefit would be to those using the rituals during critical times of their lives. The social values and wisdom of our culture would also be better preserved through the generations.

Instrument Development and Data Collection

Instrument Development

Two instruments were needed to secure data about the dependent variables: grief adjustment and ritual participation. The Adjustment Scale, developed by Carey (1979-80), was accepted as the instrument to measure grief adjustment. This scale is a quantitative measure which can locate a person in a continuum between healthy adjustment in grief and a level of depression.

Development of the other instrument to test ritual participation was done through a review board and pilot test. Five pastors and a grief counselor were asked to evaluate the initial draft of the instrument (Ritual Involvement Inventory). Extensive conversation followed their review. The instrument was changed significantly because of their input. After redevelopment of the instrument, eight widows read through it to determine if it was clear and could be answered without help. Their ability to do this task well meant that the instrument was not altered.

A field test was then performed. The purpose of the field test was to determine reliability of the instrument and to test the research design for data collection.

Requests were sent to senior pastors of 35 churches in Kalamazoo County asking for names of widows in their congregation. The widows were to have experienced the death of their husbands 13-16 months prior to the study. Copies of both instruments were provided to the pastors for their understanding. There were 13 widows who

subsequently responded to this procedure. Reliability for the Ritual Involvement Inventory was .69, and for the Adjustment Scale it was .61.

Data Collection

Actual data collection for the study reflected the procedure used in the field test. Senior pastors of churches in 12 counties in western Michigan were requested to provide names of widows in their congregation. The same time constraint of 13-16 months since the death of their husbands was applied to the widows. Again, both instruments and a cover letter for the pastor to sign and return were included in the letter to the pastors. Only 37 ministers responded to this first request.

After the second request, 24 more pastors responded. A third telephone request to 15 pastors brought no results. Data collection was suspended after 7 months.

There were 60 widows' names provided by the ministers. Each widow received both instruments and a cover letter signed by their pastor. Although 49 widows responded, 9 of them did not complete the items of both instruments.

Limitations

The grief Adjustment Scale had an item with inverse scoring. With this item, the widows were asked if they were at peace and content most of the time. Positively phrased, the item varies from the others which use negative terms, such as, loneliness,

depression, and futile. This one positively stated item could have led to misunderstandings for the widows.

Clearer instructions might have eliminated the problem of widows not fully completing the instruments. The Ritual Involvement Inventory was a two-page instrument. Several of the women failed to complete the back side of this instrument even though instruction was made to do so. Putting the instrument onto two pages might have helped the widows notice the other questions.

Securing the population for this research proved to be a difficult task. The return rate from the widows, however, was excellent. Overall return was 82%. The Roman Catholic widows' return was 72.7%, the United Methodist widows' was 79.2%, and the Reformed church widows' return rate was 100%. The first step of obtaining names of widows from the pastors was not easy. Any response from pastors, whether they had widows' names or not, was low (29%). Reluctance to provide names of grieving parishioners to an unknown researcher could have been the reason.

This particular study was based on denominational differences. Widows' names, therefore, needed to be secured through individual congregations. This provided a severe limitation upon the study.

The field study return rate (60%) was much higher. Most of the pastors contacted for field study knew of the researcher and/or her own pastoral responsibilities. Pastors of the western Michigan counties did not have this personal contact with the researcher. Perhaps more foundational work could have been done with the pastors before they were requested to provide names. Conversation with and

permission by bishops or area ministers might have provided an introduction to pastors and increase trust of the study. Presentations about the research at state clergy meetings might also have provided encouragement for pastors to participate.

Research Findings

Three research hypotheses were proposed in this study. They were:

Research Hypothesis 1: The amount of ritualistic participation by widows after the death of their husbands is related to the widows' denominational affiliation.

Research Hypothesis 2: Adjustment to grief will vary according to the widows' denominational affiliation.

Research Hypothesis 3: The relationship between widows' ritual participation and grief adjustment will differ according to the widows' denomination.

Within these hypotheses the independent variable is denominational membership: Roman Catholic, United Methodist, and Reformed Church in America. The dependent variables are ritual participation and grief adjustment.

Analysis for the first two hypotheses was performed using one-way ANOVA. The first hypothesis, once tested, resulted in a probability of F of .04 for the analysis of variance among the denominations and ritual participation. The null hypothesis was rejected because the probability of F was smaller than alpha at .05. A Tukey post hoc analysis indicated significant differences between ritual

participation means of Roman Catholic widows and United Methodist widows.

Contrary to expectation the United Methodist women were involved in the least amount of ritual following their husbands' death. The literature review indicated the Reformed church widows would participate in the least ritual. Certainly, further research with United Methodist widows could help clarify this finding.

The second hypothesis, once tested, resulted in a probability of F of .50 for the analysis of variance among the denominations and grief adjustment. Since alpha was set at .05, there was no significant difference among the widows of the three denominations in grief adjustment. The null hypothesis, therefore, was retained.

Testing the third hypothesis brought the most perplexing results. Using a Pearson r , it was found that there was a negative correlation between ritual participation and grief adjustment when the denominations were considered together ($r = -.28$). The Roman Catholic widows also had a negative correlation ($r = -.21$) between the two variables. Reformed church widows had practically no correlation ($r = .09$) between grief adjustment and ritual participation. None of these are significant correlations. However, the United Methodist widows were significantly negatively correlated ($r = -.69$). This means that the less ritual in which they participated, the higher their scores in grief adjustment. It also means that those who scored as well adjusted to their grief had low ritual participation scores. This finding is in direct opposition to the research hypothesis, which led to the expectation that more ritual

involvement would be related to higher grief adjustment scores. Clearly, more research in this area would be helpful.

Limitations

There are important questions to be addressed about bias of the sample. Neither data collection nor instrument development addressed them. Widows do not experience the same depth of grief in their husband's death. Although the span of widowhood (13-16 months) was constant, the level of pain or relief at their husband's death was never sought. For a variety of reasons some widows may have been relieved from the death, rather than distressed from it.

Many years ago the distinctive flavor of denominations would be much more obvious than today. With increasing numbers of people crossing denominational lines for church membership specific practices are more generic. The sample studied was not asked how long or how actively involved they were in their denomination.

The size of congregation and town would also influence the research findings. Small town (and small congregation) life and ritual are different from metropolitan and large congregation life.

The small sample for this research limited the possibility of making generalizations to other populations. Securing a larger population would be much easier if pastors did not have to be the middle connector. This limitation (of data collection) then affected the research findings.

The value of this research was limited by the small return. The negative correlation of ritual to grief adjustment for the

United Methodist women is difficult to interpret. This finding indicates that United Methodist widows work through their grief as well as their Roman Catholic and Reformed church counterparts without having as much of the identified, organized rituals to help them.

Future Research

Grief is such a critical experience of life that research to find helpful ways in moving through it shall always be important. The church has historically been one of our society's agents in teaching people how to cope with death and dying. Exploring the relationship between rituals of the church and grief adjustment could lead to a healthier social order, as well as renewed integrity and meaning found in the church. Though this research study did not find indication of any positive correlation of ritual participation and adjustment during grief, further research could clarify the issue.

Another inventory to ascertain ritual participation could be reflective of more activities that would help grievers. Eliminating those rituals in which most of the widows participated and adding others not so frequently used could show a clearer relationship between the two dependent variables. Reworking the Adjustment Scale so all items would be positively or negatively worded would also be valuable.

Clearer demographic information would be helpful. How long widows had been related to the denomination, how large was the

congregation, and how painful was the grief are all factors that should be considered.

Increasing the number of denominations in the study and adding those of more diverse heritage (e.g., Pentecostal, Missionary Baptist, Mennonite) could lead to sharper differences in the results. New categories of ritual might need to be added because of increasing the number of denominations. The impact of rituals (category by category) might then be correlated to the level of grief adjustment. This would move the research from the generalized impact of ritual to more specific relationships of ritual and grief. A broader and nongeographically bound study would be helpful to the same research issues of this study.

More in depth study of United Methodist activities for widows seems to be mandated by the results of this study. There may be other significant ways those churches are helping move their widows through grief. The specific rituals named on the inventory are perhaps not related to the grief adjustment of these women.

Summary

This chapter synthesized the various aspects of the research study. Beginning with a rationale for the research, this chapter also delineated data collection and the severe limitations encountered during those procedures. The findings of the research were discussed, as well as the possibilities for future research.

Appendix A

Approval Letter From Western Michigan University
Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Out 4/13/89

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HSIRB APPROVAL FORM

Protocol I.D. No. _____
Date Received _____
Initial Review Date _____
Reviewer(s) _____

Date Approved 4/12/89

Approval Given as:

1. Final ✓
2. Provisional _____

HSIRB Comments/Recommended Changes:

Approved - 4/22/89

*Note - The original of this protocol disapproved
after I read it, including attachments, + approved.
This is copy of protocol only.*

The HSIRB categorized this application as:

- ✓ 1. Involving subjects at no more than minimal risk
_____ 2. Involving subjects at more than minimal risk

Ellen K. Page-Rein
HSIRB Chair Signature

4/12/89
Date

Appendix B
Adjustment Scale

Adjustment Scale

	Yes	Uncertain (to some extent)	No
1. Is <u>loneliness</u> a serious problem for you?	Y	U	N
2. Do you feel you are about <u>to go to pieces</u> once a month or more?	Y	U	N
3. Are you sometimes so unhappy that you would <u>not care</u> if you <u>died tomorrow</u> ?	Y	U	N
4. Are you at <u>peace and content</u> most of the time?	Y	U	N
5. Do you often feel <u>depressed</u> (sad, low, blue, despondent)?	Y	U	N
6. Is <u>depression</u> a serious problem?	Y	U	N
7. Do you <u>cry</u> frequently?	Y	U	N
8. Do you sometimes feel your life is <u>futile and empty</u> ?	Y	U	N

Note. From "Weathering Widowhood: Problems and Adjustment of the Widowed During the First Year" by R. G. Carey, 1979-80, Omega: The Journal of Death and Dying, 10, pp. 163-174.

Appendix C
Scoring for Adjustment Scale

Adjustment Scale

	Yes	Uncertain (to some extent)	No
1. Is <u>loneliness</u> a serious problem for you?	Y = 1	U = 2	N = 3
2. Do you feel you are about <u>to go to pieces</u> once a month or more?	Y = 1	U = 2	N = 3
3. Are you sometimes so unhappy that you would <u>not care</u> if you <u>died tomorrow</u> ?	Y = 1	U = 2	N = 3
4. Are you at <u>peace and content</u> most of the time?	Y = 3	U = 2	N = 1
5. Do you often feel <u>depressed</u> (sad, low, blue, despondent)?	Y = 1	U = 2	N = 3
6. Is <u>depression</u> a serious problem?	Y = 1	U = 2	N = 3
7. Do you <u>cry</u> frequently?	Y = 1	U = 2	N = 3
8. Do you sometimes feel your life is <u>futile and empty</u> ?	Y = 1	U = 2	N = 3

Note. The scoring codes would be omitted in actual use. Dr. Carey has issued permission for the use of the Adjustment Scale in this study.

Appendix D
Ritual Involvement Inventory--Draft 1

Ritual Involvement Inventory

INSTRUCTIONS: Please check the appropriate spaces which identify what happened at the time of the death of your spouse.

- I. After the death of your spouse--but before the funeral--did you:

a. meet with your pastor	YES	NO
b. have opportunity for visitation, reminiscing, and storytelling time with friends and family	YES	NO
c. view the body of your spouse	YES	NO
d. participate in a scripture or prayer service before the funeral	YES	NO

- II. During the funeral and committal service of your spouse, was there:

a. a set and known liturgy that you anticipated	YES	NO
b. a participation by the community in the liturgy (e.g., responsive readings, poems, or eulogies read)	YES	NO
c. emotional expression vented by you	YES	NO
d. a processional of family and/or friends following the body	YES	NO
e. disposition of the body through internment, burial, or cremation	YES	NO
f. a literal or visual expression of "ashes to ashes, dust to dust"	YES	NO

- III. After the funeral and committal services of your spouse, did you participate in:

a. a community meal of family and friends	YES	NO
b. a prescribed time of mourning	YES	NO
c. a service of remembrance within a year of your spouse's death	YES	NO

Appendix E
Ritual Involvement Inventory--Draft 2

Ritual Involvement Inventory

INSTRUCTIONS: Please circle the appropriate answers which identify what happened at the time of the death of your spouse.

I. After the death of your spouse--but before the funeral--did you:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| a. meet with your pastor or priest | YES | NO |
| b. have calling hours at home or the funeral home | YES | NO |
| c. have opportunity for visitation, reminiscing, and storytelling time with friends and family | YES | NO |
| d. view the body of your spouse | YES | NO |
| e. have opportunity to help plan the funeral | YES | NO |
| f. participate in a short scripture or prayer service before the funeral | YES | NO |

II. During the funeral and committal service of your spouse:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| a. were you aware of a set order of worship | YES | NO |
| b. was there hymn singing | YES | NO |
| c. did those gathered participate in the worship through readings, eulogies, congregational prayers, poems | YES | NO |
| d. did you cry | YES | NO |
| e. was the body present | YES | NO |
| f. did the family or friends process after the body | YES | NO |
| g. was the body or were the ashes placed in the grave | YES | NO |
| h. was the dirt thrown or the ashes crumbled into the grave | YES | NO |

III. After the funeral and committal of your spouse:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| a. was there a meal or reception for family and friends | YES | NO |
| b. were you aware of an expected time of mourning | YES | NO |
| c. was there a service of remembrance within a year of your spouse's death | YES | NO |
| d. were you involved in planning the use of memorial gifts designated for the church | YES | NO |

Appendix F

Data Scoring

Data Scoring

1. Denominational difference

1 = Roman Catholic

2 = United Methodist

3 = Reformed Church in America

2. Adjustment Scale

score = 8-24

3. Ritual Involvement Inventory

score = 1-18

Appendix G
First Request to Pastors

Dear Pastor:

I am writing a dissertation entitled "Denominational Rituals as Influencers of Grief Adjustment." This is the final requirement to fulfill before I receive a doctorate in Educational Leadership from Western Michigan University.

The dissertation is a study of the way rituals help people through the grieving process. The rituals that are a vital part of our faith communities are the ones I have chosen to research.

The population I am seeking for this research are widows whose husbands died between December 1, 1987, and April 1, 1988. I would like these widows to complete two short questionnaires which measure the amount of ritual in which they participated and the adjustment they have made to their grief. Copies of both these instruments are enclosed. The women's responses would be kept anonymous.

Would you be willing to share with me the names of widows from your congregation? I would send them a copy of the two questionnaires and ask that they return them to me by mail. Enclosed in the packet to the widows would be a letter of explanation signed by you and me. Would you complete the form at the bottom of the page and sign the "Parishioner" letter and return them to me?

Time is important to me at this point. I have accepted a call to serve as pastor of First Christian Church, Carbondale, Illinois, at the end of April. I am attempting to mail out the surveys before leaving Michigan. I will be returning in June to work with the results of the data received.

Thank you for your time. I do hope this Easter season brings you challenge and renewal in your ministerial leadership.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Webb

Widows whose husbands died between December 1, 1987, and April 1, 1988, are: (please use the back if needed)

Name of church _____

I am unable to provide widows from this time period _____

Appendix H
Cover Letter to Widows

16 May 1989

Dear Parishioner,

Enclosed are two short surveys dealing with grief and ritual in the faith community. They are being used by Suzanne Webb to gain information for her doctoral dissertation from Western Michigan University. Suzanne is writing about the relationship between ritual and grief for widows in the Church.

Would you take a few minutes and complete these surveys and return them in the enclosed envelope? Just circle the response that coincides closer to your feelings and experience. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and your name will not be used. Hopefully, the results of the study will help the church better minister to grieving persons in the future.

Suzanne Webb has recently left a church in Kalamazoo and is serving as pastor of First Christian Church, Carbondale, Illinois.

Thank you for the time you may consider giving to this research project.

Sincerely,

and

Suzanne Webb

Appendix I
Second Request to Pastors

5 October 1989

Dear Pastor:

A few months ago I wrote requesting your help for the writing of my doctoral dissertation from Western Michigan University. I have recently moved, begun a new ministry, but am picking up the last pieces of research for that dissertation. It could well be that you responded to me before and that letter has not been forwarded. Would you please consider again helping me?

The dissertation is entitled "Denominational Rituals as Influencers of Grief Adjustment." It is a study of the way rituals help people through the grieving process. The rituals that are a vital part of our faith communities are the ones I have chosen to research.

The population I am seeking for this research are widows whose husbands died between February 1, 1988 and June 1, 1988. I would like these widows to complete two short questionnaires which measure the amount of ritual in which they participated and the adjustment that have made to their grief. Copies of both these instruments are enclosed. The women's responses would be kept anonymous.

Would you be willing to share with me the names of widows from your congregation? I would send them a copy of the two questionnaires and ask that they return them to me by mail. Enclosed in the packet to the widows would be a letter of explanation signed by you and me. Would you:

1. complete the form at the bottom of this page and
 2. sign the "Parishioner" letter
- and return them both to me?

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Webb

Widows whose husbands died between February 1, 1988 and June 1, 1988, are:

Name and location of your church _____

I am unable to provide widows from this time period _____

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