SPECIAL STATE-OF-THE-ART ARTICLE

DEVELOPING A CROSS-CULTURAL MODEL OF GRIEF: THE STATE OF THE FIELD

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the state of the field in developing a cross-cultural model of grief. Dialogues within several disciplines bear on the question, but those dialogues are very separated from each other. After drawing a distinction between cross-cultural and multi-cultural, the article reviews research from a broad range of psychological and social sciences. The issue of psychic unity vs. cultural diversity had prevented fuller use of anthropologists' work, but sociology of knowledge mediates between those poles. Contemporary work on the universality of emotions provides the concept of innate meta interpretive schemas within cognitive models supplied by culture. Cultural historians trace changes in how death is perceived and in the acceptability of emotional expression. The article concludes with two suggestions to carry the field forward: one a large scale cross-cultural survey and the other qualitative study in both the researcher's culture and in other cultures.

Humans obviously have been responding to the deaths of significant others from the beginning of our species. The sense of sorrow with its attendant physical manifestations seems to be part of a common heritage that we share with many primate species. At a symbolic and metaphoric level, death is used to understand other realities in human life. Every culture's religious world includes explanations and guidelines for coming to terms with individual deaths. It would seem then, that we should be able to find some universal patterns within the amazingly diverse cultural forms by which peoples express their response to death.

In the modern, developed West both the individual and social responses to significant deaths are called grief or mourning. Although some intellectual schools make various distinctions between those terms, there is no consistency between the distinctions so this article will treat the terms as interchangeable. The editors of this *Journal* have invited this article to assess the state of the field in developing a model of grief that can apply cross-culturally, that is, a model of grief that can allow us to understand the individual and communal response to death in our own culture and to sympathically understand the response in other cultures in a way that opens the most complete reading of our own experience and the experience of others. The task takes on some urgency when we consider that the "grief work hypothesis," the model of grief used by scholars and clinicians since 1917, is not well supported by the data (see Klass, Silverman, & Nickman, 1996). Criticism of the grief work model, both from empirical (Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen, & Stroebe, 1992; Stroebe, 1992) as well as psychoanalytic (Hagman, 1995) scholars, cites among other shortcomings, the fact that the grief work model is not cross-culturally applicable. In the larger clinical world, DSMIV (1994) uses culture as a variable in assessing pathology (and by implication, health). It includes cultural variations in some clinical disorders and, in an appendix, lists some disorders that may be culturally bound (see pp. xxivxxv; 843-849). It specifically mentions that seeing or hearing the deceased during bereavement may be misdiagnosed if cultural factors are not taken into account. If, then, we are to develop a new model of grief that is usable by both clinicians and researchers, it will have to satisfy the cross-cultural criterion.

The assignment I have been given opens in several directions at once and brings us into a diverse set of disciplinary dialogues. I think the most I can hope to do with my assignment is to define the question, to explore some of the facets of the question, to introduce what seem to me to be relevant voices and directions in the discussion, and to propose a direction for the field that seems to have the best chance at eventual success.

I. CROSS-CULTURAL IS NOT MULTI-CULTURAL

I am exploring the idea that we can develop a concept of grief that can apply to all cultures. In that quest we find some scholars and clinicians who are using some of the same words and examining some of the same data, but are, in fact, on a different errand. We need to make a distinction between *cross-cultural and multi-cultural* in the study of grief. As I am using the term, a cross-cultural model of grief would be a meta-model, that is a set of concepts by which we could understand and compare the ways different cultures explain the response to death, and by which we could understand and compare the ways individuals and communities respond to death in different cultures. Multi-cultural means an amalgam or composite of cultural forms that originated in more than one culture. The task of the multi-culturalists is to expand the field to be applicable in a plu-

ralistic world, that is in a social environment created by people from many cultural backgrounds. Let us briefly examine the multi-cultural project.

As Euro-American culture becomes increasingly pluralistic, there has been a growing recognition among social service and mental health professionals, including those in thanatology, that the diagnostic and intervention techniques developed in one subculture might not be appropriate with another subculture. "United States and Canadian societies have traditionally been predominantly white in race and Christian in religion" (Irish, Lundquist, & Nelsen, 1993, p. 1), say the multi-culturalists. Professionals have largely come from the majority culture. The multi-culturalists' point of view, then, is "we as mainstream helpers" (Parry & Ryan, 1995, p. ix). Multi-culturalism, therefore "intentionally focused upon ethnic groups about which our professional personnel are less well informed and/or with which they have had little or no experience" (Irish, Lundquist, & Nelsen, 1993, p. 1) The task is presenting the "others," who have heretofore been excluded. Multi-cultural books tend to move quickly from the overview to chapters by contributors on selected "other" cultures. Some of the editors include gays or lesbians as cultural minorities, so it is difficult to know where the line between white Christian cultural models of grief and other cultural models of grief, that is, between "mainstream helpers" and "others," is to be drawn. Other cultures, they say, are to be understood, acknowledged, appreciated, and valued. Intervention will work if only the counselor remains aware of the client's cultural understanding of death and of the influence of culture during the counseling process (Wibly, 1995).

The problem for the multi-culturalists, it seems, is with the mainstream helpers' understanding of "others," not with any inadequacy of mainstream helpers' understanding of themselves. Irish, Lundquist, and Nelsen are the most explicit: "The editors have deliberately omitted any chapters covering the most common and conventional societal patterns (i.e., majority culture) related to dying, death, and bereavement" (p. 1). As the multi-culturalists conceive their task, it seems, revision of the mainstream's model of grief in light of models from other cultures is not on their addenda.

The underlying assumption seems to be: Diversity is not difference. Grief is understood to be universal, but grief has "variations" in different cultures just as, it seems, in a musical score there can be variations on a melody. "Death and grief, though they are universal, . . . occur within a social milieu, and deeply embedded within each person's reality" (Irish, Lundquist, & Nelsen, p. 187), that is, the universal is only experienced within culturally defined reality.

If we ask the multi-culturalists exactly what is universal in grief, their answer turns out to be more dependent on the predisposition of the authors of multi- cultural books than it is dependent on research on other cultures. Because Irish, Lundquist, and Nelsen are sociologists and educators it is not surprising that the universal they find is that "One strand appears in the fabric of all cultural groups in relations to death: the importance of community or group support" (p. 184).

Parkes, who in his earlier work most clearly formulated the grief work model, assumes that "the concept of pathological grief, for instance, is common although it is defined in different ways in different cultures" (Parkes, Laungani, & Young, 1997, p. 207). No data from any of his book's chapters are cited to support Parkes's statement. There may be socially approved responses (crying or not crying, speaking or not speaking about the dead, communicating or not communicating with the dead) but pathology is a particularly modem Euro-American concept. Parkes says that the prominent feature in all cultures is that "Old assumptions about the world have to be given up and new ones figured out" (p. 208). But again, no data from the chapters on specific cultures are cited. Changing assumptions is a peculiarly modern concept, not one that is shared by many peoples. One has to assume that one has assumptions before one can presume to change them, and there is slim data on how many peoples do either.

Although most authors in the multi-cultural study of grief have no background in the cross-cultural project, Laungani did. Before he turned to the question of grief Laungani had developed a typology of cultural ways of defining what Euro-American culture calls psychological problems and psychological/psychiatric treatment. His system is based on a set of dimensions: individualism/communalism, cognitivism/emotionalism, and free will/determinism (1992, 1993). It is difficult to know why Laungani does not bring his concepts to bear in the book on multi-cultural grief (Parkes, Laungani, & Young, 1997).

In the multi-cultural books about grief where scholars claim to know something about universal dynamics, a check of the references shows that the authority becomes rather elusive. For example, Parry and Ryan cite Cooklin (1989) that

> It is known that people who are able to show and share sadness and distress
> and secondarily to receive support in showing and sharing this distress . . .
> will have fewer symptoms than those who do not (Cooklin, 1989, p. 90).

But Cooklin only cites Tseng and Hsu (1991), whose book is a general cultural survey of different family patterns, devoting only a few pages on death and grief (pp. 42-43 and pp. 168-170). The only source Tseng and Hsu cite for Cooklin's idea is Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson (1976), whose study we will examine in detail shortly. For now we can say Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson began with the twentieth century scholarly/clinical definition of grief. Walter's (1997) has shown that emotional expressiveness and emotional reserve is a contemporary tension within English (and, I would add, North American) society, and that "almost all the current books and media documentaries on bereavement are produced by expressivists" (p. 136). Parry and Ryan's claim about the helpfulness of showing and sharing distress, then, is grounded in one side of a tension within their own culture.

As the world grows increasingly pluralistic, multi-culturalism is a necessary corrective for clinicians. As a model, multi-culturalism is useful for action in the

present. Admirable as is its goal of serving the human needs of everyone in a pluralistic society, however, it seems that multi-culturalism, so far, is not of much use to us as we ask the cross-cultural question. It appears that the multi-culturalists assume a universal entity called grief, but they do not define it, or prove its existence.

II. LACUNAE IN CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

It seems reasonable to expect that the cross-cultural study of grief would have been a good subject for the emerging field of cross-cultural psychology because it is a shared experience among peoples. It also seems reasonable to expect that it would be a subject in the very old field of psychology of religion, because a part of the rituals and beliefs of the major religious traditions concern transcending death (see Chidester, 1990). Neither expectation turns out to be realized. In the recently published second edition of the *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology* (Berry, Poortinga, & Pandey, 1997) no studies of grief are noted. One of the issues for cross-cultural psychology seems to be whether it is possible to do well-controlled experiments in such widely diverse cultural settings. Thus, because the "scientific" demands of general psychology are not challenged in cross-cultural psychology, the expressions and interactions of grief are too complex to be studied within the methodological limits they set. Even though comparative religion has been the core of Religious Studies for three decades, there are no cross-cultural studies of grief cited in Wulff's (1997) encyclopedic survey of the psychology of religion.

Traditional empirical tools have been used to compare responses to death under similar circumstances in different cultures, although the distance between the cultures studied is not so great as might be desired and the lack of similar controlling hypotheses makes generalizations difficult. Cleiren, Grad, Zavasnik, and Diekstra (1996) examined psycho-social problems of fifty-three Slovenian and thirty-two Dutch spouses bereaved by unnatural causes: suicide and traffic fatality. Structured interviews using standardized measures were used to gather data on depression, substance use, social reactions, and acceptance and attribution of the loss. They found that people from both countries showed more similarities than differences. Depressed symptoms were slightly higher in Slovenian, but symptom patterns were almost identical. Social acceptance was more problematic when death was due to suicide, particularly in Slovenia. They note that Slovenians visited the grave more often, but in the Netherlands, cremation and scattering the ashes is more common, so in many cases there is no grave to visit. Victoria (1995) measured emotional and psychological adjustment, depression levels, use of support systems between Filipino American and Caucasian Americans and found major differences. Alford and Catlin (1995) analyzed reports of university students in the United States and in Spain on the effects of

the death of a loved one. U.S. students reported that after death their self-esteem was diminished as were their liking and trust of others. Spanish students reported that self-esteem was down, but that the experience of the death had a positive effect on liking and trust of others.

III. CROSS-CULTURALLY TESTING THE GRIEF WORK MODEL

Some studies hold the grief work model as normative and ask how social structures help or retard grief. Ablon (1971) described supports built into the social structure of a Samoan community that help to alleviate emotional distress associated with bereavement in Western cultures. Miller and Schoenfeld (1973) applied the grief work hypothesis in diagnosing pathological grief in thirty-four Navajo patients. They found cultural factors that contributed to such pathological reactions: prohibition of mourning for more than four days after death, a general fear of the ghost, and sanctions against expression of anger caused the patients they studied to somatize rather than to express their grief.

In the whole of modern grief scholarship only one study has systematically attempted to test a contemporary model of grief by cross-cultural comparison. Whatever shortcomings are now evident after nearly a quarter of a century, Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson's *Grief and mourning in cross-cultural perspective* (1976) (also see Rosenblatt, Walsh, & Jackson, 1972) stands as the standard for one method of research that can be applied in the field. Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson's method is both rigorous and common-sensible. They pulled out behavioral response and emotional expressions of grief as identified by the standard model of grief of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Their conceptual framework on grief and mourning relies on Averill (1968), Freud (1917), Gorer (1965), Lindemann (1944), Mandelbaum (1965), and Marris (1975). In this model, death brings on strong emotions and marked changes in patterns of behavior. Emotions are sadness, anger, fear, anxiety, guilt, loneliness, numbness, and general tension. Changes in behavior include loss of appetite, disruption of work, loss of interest, decreased sociability, disrupted sleep, and disturbing dreams.

The research then examined reports of grief and mourning in seventy-eight cultures. Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson's procedure "was to have two trained raters independently evaluate our seventy-eight societies on the cultural attributes of interest to us" (1976, p. 3). They asked about the expression of the emotion of bereavement.

> If we are going to assert that it is valid to compare society with society and American society with others, it is important that we establish at the onset that grief in other societies resembles grief in America (p. 13).

They examine crying (data on 73 societies; present in all but one), anger and aggression (present in 76%—50 of 66 societies that they could measure) and fear (that they found too hard to define and measure). The authors thus conclude:

> It seems basically human for emotions to be expressed in bereavement. When a person reacts with crying, overt anger, or overt fear, that person is behaving as some people in most societies do (p. 23).

They also examine gender differences in emotionality and conclude:

> Although there is a substantial amount of similarity between men and women in emotionality during bereavement, there is consistency across cultures in the pattern of sex differences. Where there are differences, women seem to cry, to attempt self-mutilation, and actually to self-mutilate more then men; men seen to show more anger and aggression directed away from self (p. 24).

Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson accept the grief work model as true and thus assume that:

> If people who are bereaved are to return to reasonably normal patterns of pro-ductivity and social life, they need to "work through" the loss. Working though processes include acceptance of the loss, extinction of no longer adap-tive behavioral dispositions, acquisition of new behavioral dispositions, and relationships, and dissipation of guilt, anger, and other disruptive emotions (p. 6).

Death, they say, creates frustration, therefore anger and aggression for which mourning customs are designed to control. There are two ways to control poten-tially dangerous emotions. The first way is suppression, usually accomplished in rituals. Rituals also minimize anger and aggression by providing for the needs of the survivor, especially dependence needs (p. 34, see Doi, 1973, pp. 62-63, 124-125; and Klass, 1996, for a discussion of the role of autonomy and depend-ence in grief from a Japanese perspective). The second way to control dangerous emotions is to channel them along non-destructive paths as the culture provides publicly recognized and tolerated targets, for example: self, out-group members, inanimate objects, spirits, animals, a presumed killer.

Summarizing their findings, Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson think that to a great extent they have confirmed the grief work model.

> We have argued that dispositions toward anger and aggression are univer-sal components of bereavement. To control these dispositions, societies may employ ritual specialists, whose ritual guidance of the bereaved helps to curtail the expression of anger and aggression in a number of ways. Alternatively, societies may allow institutionalized expression of anger and

aggression, coupled with control on the spread of anger and aggression through the use of marking or isolation of the bereaved (p. 47).

The weakness of Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson's study becomes most apparent when they turn to the issues of continuing bonds between the living and the dead. The grief model they use assumes that it is the task of grief work to break the bonds between the living and the dead, thereby freeing the living to establish new attachments that will serve them in the present (see Klass, Silverman, & Nickman, 1996; Walter, 1996). More contemporary theory holds that people do not always sever their bonds with the dead, but may retain their connection with the dead so that the bonds with the dead serve the living in similar ways as before the death. Some of Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson's data could have been useful in developing a continuing bonds model, for example, they found that the ghosts people perceived were most often close relatives and that the spirits became more distant with time. Still, because Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson do see not the shortcomings of the model with which they started, they do not use the data they found to revise their original model.

Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson discuss the "residues" of relationship left behind by a person who dies, and discuss some cultural devices for reducing and eventually minimizing the effects of the residues. Specifically they isolate two elements that can be compared across their sample of cultures: belief in ghosts and responding to familiar stimuli in ways that would only be appropriate if the deceased were alive (p. 49). We will pursue the questions of ghosts. They find that of sixty-six societies for which information is available to rate, ghost beliefs were present in all but one. "Thus, ghost beliefs seem to us to be nearly universal (if not universal) cross-culturally" (pp. 51-52). Citing data from Glick, Weiss, and Parkes (1974), Rees (1975), and others, they recognize that the majority of Europeans believe in ghosts. Rather than seeing that the nearly universal folk belief in ghosts calls for a critique of the grief work model with which they started, Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson reduce the issue to an individual problem. When Americans or Europeans believe they are communicating with a deceased person, the belief isolates them from the social system (as if the scholarly and professional world is the social system), so individuals may fear insanity (as clinicians of the day so labeled them). They say that professionals should know that belief in ghosts is not crazy and that "We hope that the greater acceptance by professionals and lay persons of ghost cognitions will result from the cross-cultural information presented in this book" (p. 58). But they do not see that the pervasiveness of their data might cause them to reexamine the idea of grief with which they began.

One of the most obvious research projects available in the cross-cultural study of grief would be to examine a cross cultural sample of reports with the same rigor as Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson, but to try to have fewer cultural blinders than they had in their initial definition of areas and issues.

IV. AN OLD QUESTION IN ANTHROPOLOGY:
PSYCHIC UNITY—CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Because anthropologists study culture, it seems natural to turn to them as we ask about the possibility of a cross-cultural model of grief. We quickly discover, however, that the anthropologists have a theoretical question at the heart of their field that makes the question hard for them.

> Many of the recurring anxieties of contemporary anthropology can be traced directly to the contradictions implicit in this attempt to ground anthropology in both a powerful conception of cultural relativity and a Procrustean faith in humankind's psychic unity (Shore, 1996, p. 16).

Obviously the human mind cannot simply be reduced to evolutionary functional biological responses to environmental events. As Shore points out, human infants are born with only one quarter of their brain developed. The rest develops during the first few years in intense interpersonal interaction that transmits culture to the developing mind. Chimpanzees, in contrast, are born with nearly half of their adult brain weight. Chimps have a culture, but it seems to account for less of their mental world than in humans (Shore, 1996, p. 3).

One solution within anthropology has been to deny any universal human experience. "We can assume neither the universality of particular modes of feeling nor that similar signs of emotion correspond to the same underlying sentiments in different cultures" (Huntington & Metcalf, 1979, p. 24). Barley (1997) has recently staked out this position in regard to grief. For him, there is no such thing as grief except as a Western cultural construct. He thinks that all we can see of other cultures are bits and pieces, laid side by side like artifacts in a museum, so sprung free from their deep cultural contexts that we can never really understand what death or grief means in other cultures. Death is so fully woven into complex cultural worlds that it is impossible to grasp its meaning or the culturally prescribed ways of responding to death in any universal terms. He says the popularly accepted idea that in the "Universal Human Experience" overcoming death is the "Universal Lot of Man" (p. 15), is dead wrong. The modern concept of grief is of no use in understanding people from other cultures.

> Westerners characterize mourning as not a ritual, social or physical state but one of disordered emotions that may require therapy. Yet anthropologists have maintained that the dominant emotion at a Chinese funerals may not be grief but scarcely concealed fear of the contagion of death (p. 16).

Euro-American cultural bias leads to the idea that expression of emotion is "natural" while holding in emotional expression is not. He says that at Malay and Javanese funerals, it is forbidden to cry. Having found counter examples, he

argues, he has demolished the idea that emotional expression is universally useful, even if it is not universally practiced.

Barley says we should regard the expressions of grief as public performances. Tears may be from real feelings: "Yet just as often, emotional display is required and has little to do with actual feelings, a socially demanded performance" (p. 22). In nineteenth-century England, copious tears were required and people could turn them on as needed. Social reality is what forms inner reality, Barley says. People do not cry because they are sad; they are sad because they cry.

> For most Westerners, the problem of grief is seen as that of getting the grief *out,* like lancing a boil. . . . for anthropologists, the problem is just the reverse. It is that of getting the grief *in,* being made to feel the way you ought (p. 26).

The variety of emotions and actions expressed at funerals is so great that no genetically programmed universal response to death could possibly account for all of them.

> To the Nyakyusa of Malawi the sobriety of an English burial is astonishing. . . . Smiles and laughter have the same ambivalent relationship with internal states as tears and are not necessarily universal signs of joy. . . . Yet comedy and indulgence too have their place at death. Madness pantomime, slapstick flinging of excrement and insults, attempts to copulate with one's grandmother or the deceased, heavy sexual trading, gluttony and drunkenness are all well documented as part of regular, obligatory funeral arrangements (p. 34).

In Barley's view, there can be no universal view of grief because there is no universal place from which to look, that is the mainstream "we" of multi-culturalism is a misplaced universal. We only see the "problems" raised by death in other cultures, Barley says, in terms of our own culture. He tells of meeting a Japanese anthropologist who had done field work among the same African people as Barley. The Japanese man said he had intended to study the religion, but it was not interesting, so he looked at economics instead. Barley was surprised that the religion was not interesting. They had "a rather complicated form of ancestor worship involving bones and the destruction of the skull and all sorts of exchanges between the dead and the living" (p. 97). But then:

> He was, of course, a Buddhist who had a shrine to his departed parents in his living room, on which regular offerings were made. Later he let drop that he had taken to Africa some bone from his dead father's leg, carefully wrapped in white cloth, to ensure protection during his fieldwork. For me, ancestor worship was something to be described and analyzed. For him, it would be the *absence* of such links between the living and the dead that would require special explanation (p. 97).

Parkes, Laungani, and Young (1997) find that the insistence among anthropologists on cultural diversity and on the integrity of each cultural system has

> seriously limited the value of their work to psychologists and others who seek to make generalizations about the human condition. This has meant that although there are numerous accounts in the anthropological literature about funeral and mourning customs in many different societies, anthropologists have contributed very little to our understanding of the psychology of grief and loss (p. 13).

We cannot, however, write off the influence of culture, nor the contribution of those who study culture so easily. It may be that some aspects of grief are so physiologically based that there is no need to examine intervening cultural variables, but in the resolution of grief the issue of meaning is central: What does death mean? What does life mean? What did this person mean to me and to this community? What does my life mean now that the person is dead? What does our community mean in the face of this death?

> Meaning construction involves the perpetual encounter of a meaning-seeking subject and a historically and culturally orchestrated world of artifacts. . . . Specifically, meaning construction is a Piagetian "assimilation" process whereby people employ old cognitive models as resources for making sense out of novel experience (Shore, 1996, p. 319).

The cognitive models are supplied by the individual's cultural heritage.

Contemporary anthropologists, furthermore, seem to be breaking down the old dichotomies between mind and culture and between psychic unity and psychic diversity. The human mind develops within rich cultural interactions. The contemporary view in anthropology seems to be moving toward the idea that:

> The movement between instituted (cultural) models and mental models goes in both directions. Instituted models are made by people and are the objectification over time of someone's inner experiences. The internalization of instituted models and the externalization of mental models usually occur on quite different time scales, but taken together the comprise the basic dialectic of cultural life (Shore, 1996, p. 312; also see Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The functionalism used by Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson (1976) and many others thus gives way to a more interactive sociology of knowledge. Cultural forms, including models of grief, change as individuals in the culture accommodate their cognitive models to make sense out of the deaths in their lives.

As we attempt to develop a cross-cultural model of grief, Barley and the other cultural relativists need not speak for all of anthropology. The depth of cultural understandings developed in that discipline in a century's work can be under-

stood as externalizations of the human response to death, grief can be understood as a core element in the dialectic interchange between human experience and cultural form. The model of grief we eventually develop in the cross-cultural project can itself be a cultural form that is the externalization of our own and others' response to personally and culturally significant deaths.

V. IS GRIEF A UNIVERSAL EMOTION OR CORE RELATIONAL THEME?

If grief be an emotion, a complex of emotions, or even has a strong emotional component, in our search for a cross-cultural model of grief, we might incorporate some rather basic rethinking of the nature of emotions. Grief is among the possible universal emotions considered by a group centered around a 1990 NIMH seminar on emotion (Elman & Davidson, 1994). Shweder (1994) gives a "symbolic," "interpretive," or "intentional" theory of emotions.

> "emotion" terms are names for particular interpretive schemes (e.g., "re-morse," "guilt," "anger," "shame") of a particular story-like, script-like, or narrative kind that any people in the world might (or might not) make use of to give meaning and shape to their somatic and affective "feelings" (p. 32).

He says that

> we do not yet know whether all peoples of the world emotionalize their feelings to the same extent, or whether they emotionalize their feelings in the same "emotion" schemes when they do (p. 33).

He says, for example, that the same affective/somatic experience might be interpreted as sickness, bewitchment, or moral suffering. Because all interpretive schemes are set within larger interpretive schemes given by the culture, in Shweder's reading of the literature, as in Barley's, there are no universal emotional concepts that can be matched across languages and cultures. There may be concepts that seem the same, but on examination they are not.

Even if, however, there are no specific *universal interpretive* schemes, that is no universal emotions, there may be *meta interpretative schemes* or *core relational themes,* including grief, programmed into our genetic inheritance. Frijda (1994) says "What evidence I know of indeed suggests a considerable degree of generality, if not universality, in emotional antecedents" (p. 155). The antecedents are core relational themes such as harm, threat, loss, or success in achieving one's aims or goals.

> Which events are considered as harmful, as threats, or as losses may differ from one culture to another; whether they are so considered depends on how

the events are coded, and which concerns or values they are considered to favor or threaten. It also depends on the way the events are appraised regarding their fit with the individual's capacities for dealing with them, since core relational themes correspond to patterns of appraisals. A given event can be considered to spell future evil by one person or group, and not by another. But once a given event is conceived as representing some such themes—success, harm, loss, and the like—emotion appears to be aroused everywhere, and a similar emotion at that (pp. 155-156).

There seem to be a limited number of archetypical scripts with which cultures can narrate human experience. Similar emotion means

emotional arousal, and readiness for similar actions and activation changes *like mourning and dejection in response to loss,* readiness for avoidance or self-protection in response to threat, repair efforts and help-seeking in response to harm, and negative social behavior upon offense *(my emph)* (p. 156).

Appraisal patterns are universal and "must have wired-in eliciting conditions" (p. 160). Frijda uses personal loss as the first example of an appraisal pattern.

Personal loss leads universally to grief (sorrow, sadness, fago (sic), or whatever nameless state of mourning and apathy) because personal loss corresponds to the eliciting pattern of the grief response, namely irremediable absence (p. 160).

Death, then, can be regarded as a universal arouser of something called grief in modernity, though what particular death is significant enough to trigger the readiness for action and the activation of changes would depend on the interpretive scheme provided by the particular culture.

Personal loss, however, may not be the only appraisal pattern used to evaluate death. For example, in Europe and North America, two interpretive schemas are commonly used to evaluate deaths: loss and trauma. Some deaths are traumatic; some deaths are not traumatic; and some traumas are not deaths. Response to traumatic deaths can be described using the DSMIV codes for Acute Stress Disorder and later Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Mourning after nontraumatic deaths seems better described not using trauma categories (see Raphael & Martinek, 1997).

Anthropologists have found appraisal patterns that do not seem central in the modem West, but that are, in their estimation, central in many other cultures. In an early cross-cultural survey of anthropological reports, for example, Bendann (1930) found the dead spirit must be excluded from the living for fear of corruption, pollution, or the evil influence of the dead. Among the customs which guard against the return of the dead are: carrying the corpse out of the house by an

opening other than the ordinary door, driving away the ghost, proving that the proper mourning has been observed, dressing the dead differently than the living, and burying the dead face down or faced away from the living (pp. 57-82). In her chapter on mourning (pp. 89-109), she finds that the basic problem of mourners is protection from dead and pollution as well as from evil influences in general. Mourning is thus part of the process of protecting the living by separating them from the dead.

Some studies look at meta interpretive schemas that interact with, or override, personal loss as an interpretive schema. Huber (1972) found that the Anggor of New Guinea define themselves and the solidarity of their village largely through their opposition to a hostile and dangerous outside world. Death is caused by outsiders, by sorcery, and alienates the deceased from the moral community of the village. Relations between villages are characterized by fear and hostility that is continually renewed by death, so there is a periodic escalation of aggression between villages. So Huber sees the interpretation of death as the key feature of Anggor system of inter-village relations. Opler (1938) found that in Apache Native American tribes the fear of death and ghosts is absent when the dead person is elderly and has lived a full and complete life, and thus his ghost has little wish for revenge. Death is to be feared, however, when it strikes a young relative because he is the one to whom the family owes obligations of respect and ritual. The ghost may seek revenge for a relative's failures or death wishes. In a discussion of Japanese ancestor rituals (Klass, 1996) I tried to show that differences in the autonomy/dependence schema creates differences in the response to significant deaths.

Meta interpretive schemas can be aroused by inner events as well as by outer events. Simply the presence of a particular affective or a particular complex of affects may evoke an interpretation about the acceptability or proper mode of expressing the affect. Wikan (1988), whose work we will examine in more detail later, finds that whether it is acceptable to express emotions is based on a different meta interpretative schema in poor Egyptian communities than in Bali, although both are Muslim. Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson (1976), as we noted found "Although there is a substantial amount of similarity between men and women in emotionality during bereavement, there is consistency across cultures in the pattern of sex differences" (p. 24). That is, the meta interpretive schema for proper gender behavior interacts with the meta interpretive schema of response to personal death. Walter (1997) shows that expression, repression, and suppression of feelings is a tension within English society and is a key difference between English social classes. Indeed, we might note that a great deal of "grief therapy" is simply a reinterpretation the acceptability of certain feelings: "It's okay to cry," but not others, "You don't have to feel guilty."

Whatever meta interpretative schemes, other than mourning, are aroused by death, by a particular death, or by different affective states would seem to be culture-specific, though the emotions aroused would be similar to those aroused

when the meta interpretative schema were evoked in other circumstances. So, for example, in modem Western culture, rape evokes a response similar to that of a traumatic death. Other cultures may have meta interpretive schemes that are applied to death (pollution, revenge, failure, etc.) that are not applied in the modem West.

Other meta interpretive schemas present similar difficulties in cross-cultural study as grief. Manson's (1997) survey of the problem of cross-cultural assessment of trauma, for example, finds many of the same issues we are discussing in relationship to grief. The cross-cultural study of revenge has had less attention, though Stuckless and Goranson (1994) have assembled a good bibliography from which to begin.

As we search for a cross-cultural model of grief, then, it should be possible to find a universal response to personal loss that is separable from other kinds of responses to a particular death. It should also be possible eventually to categorize or compare cultures based on which meta interpretive schemes are applied to death in differing circumstances.

VI. POTENTIAL PITFALL: OFFICIAL THEOLOGIES AS INTERPRETIVE SCHEMA

If we look through the lens of core relational themes or meta interpretive schemas, the greatest potential pitfall is to confuse the official worldview of the culture with what individuals in the culture actually do. That is, the official cultural worldview might not be the cognitive schema an individual or a community brings to the death. It is not adequate in the cross-cultural study of grief to simply explicate the beliefs of the culture's religious tradition as if those beliefs describe the lived experience of individuals and communities in the face of every death. For example, Sakr (1995) gives a very clear presentation of an Islamic perspective on the issues after death faced by the dead person, and on the correct ways in which the survivors settle their moral, religious, and emotional accounts with the dead so each can begin their new life. Jonker (1997), in another good presentation, notes that in most Muslim societies, there is a tension between the men who do not express emotion because it would be *shirk*, not trusting the promise of resurrection and paradise, and the woman who do express emotion (pp. 154-155). It would appear from both Sakr and Jonker's work that the best way to understand grief in Muslim societies would be to begin with Islam.

Wikan (1988), however, in a very carefully done comparative study of two Muslim communities, shows that the expression of parental grief, seemingly one of the most biologically based meta interpretative schemas, is different under the influence of other meta interpretive schemas. Her central point is that the official theology of a religion is not the determinate of the response to grief, but different cultural settings of the same religion provide very different responses to grief. Thus officially, Islam teaches that each death has been predetermined, even pre-

destined, but that is interpreted differently. In Egypt, emotions are to be expressed, for mental health is damaged if they are held in.

> The God in whose power they place themselves is one whose name they in-
> voke time and again every day, beseeching him to help them through the mis-
> eries they see as inescapably grounded in their own human lot. Truly more
> than they can bear, they call on him to bear witness to their trials and tribula-
> tions, rewarding the just, punishing the unjust, making tomorrow a better day.
> True life is fated, but not immune to human effort; God helps only her who
> helps herself. Theirs is a very close and present God, compassionate, just, and
> forgiving. Should not God understand that sadness is one thing, subjugation
> to his will is another? (p. 459)

But in Bali, sad or negative emotions are not to be expressed because the emo-
tions will spill from the individual to the community and thus cause negative
feelings in the community and cause the spirit of the individual and of the indi-
viduals in the community to weaken, and in the weakened state be vulnerable to
black magic which causes up to 50 percent of deaths. The idea of death and pre-
destination is put in service of the cultural prohibition to express the sadness of
grief.

Wikan is looking at the social sanction on the expression of grief in the two
cultures, "which is not to say that the experience of grief necessarily differs so
much between the two cultures" (p. 455). Indeed, she finds that in Bali, that there
is an inner urge to cry and wail, but it is culturally repressed. She seems to find
that grief is similar, though she cannot say. But there is a difference between the
culture's response to the emotional expression of grief. So in Egypt, family, espe-
cially the women,

> will cry as if pouring their hearts out. Females will scream, yell, beat their
> breasts, collapse in each other's arms and be quite beyond themselves for
> days, even weeks on end (p. 452).

The mother is expected to go into a catatonic-like state for months, or even a year.
While in Bali the family, including the mother, tries to restrain their emotions and

> strive to act with calm and composure, especially beyond the circle of closest
> family and closest friends. But even among intimates, their reactions will be
> moderate, and laughter, joking and cheerfulness mingle with mutely
> expressed sadness (p. 452).

Wikan says this may be because the mother-child bond is understood differ-
ently in the two cultures. In Egypt, nothing is seen as stronger, and a child raised
by other than its own mother is the worst of fates. In Bali, there is a highly devel-
oped fosterage, in which for a variety of reasons, children may be taken from the

mother and given to another family within the kin group. So, she says, maybe the threat of the child being taken makes the Bali mothers bond less strongly. But Wikan rejects this argument saying her data have much evidence of strong attachments between mother and child. Rather, the reason for the Balinese response is their belief in the importance of "spirit," that is the spirit of the individual which can have such a strong effect over the body, and over the community. To have a strong spirit is the key to health in the individual and in the community. That is, it opens them up to black magic. Wikan notes that after the danger of the strong emotions of grief has passed and the survivor is in a happier time, the sorrow of the grief can be mentioned. She notes the case of a young woman whose fiancee died and people made fun of her when she expressed sadness and anger. But a year later when she married another man people expressed sympathy about the death (see p. 455) for now the emotions were safe.

VII. HISTORIANS CAN HELP

There is a constant interchange between cultural models and individual mental models. Cultural models are the objictification of experience over time just as individual cognitive models are internalized cultural models (Moller, 1996, p. 312). Historians tracing changes in culture with respect to how death is perceived and how grief is perceived and expressed should be of help in the search for a cross-cultural model of grief. As it turns out, in recent years cultural historians have done a great deal of research that can be helpful in our project. Among the many advantages of historical scholarship is that when it is on our own culture, we can see our ideas and response patterns in a new perspective. When the historical research is on our own culture, we can understand peoples whose worlds are different from our own at a depth that is more difficult to achieve with a culture that is further removed from our own.

McDannell and Lang (1988), for example, trace the social and cultural history, from classical times to the present, of the images Christians use to describe life after death. There is a continual tension between heaven as a human place, with continuing bonds with those we loved on earth, and heaven as a non-human place, where the triviality of human relationships are replaced by the bond or union with God alone. In his early writings, for example, Augustine was in the God-only tradition. Celibate life was a rejection of the distracting ties of family as well as a rejection of the corrupt body in favor of the disembodied spirit. "For the ascetic Augustine, human community proficed solace in this world, but God would provide all happiness in the next" (p. 58). Later Augustine thought there would be spiritual bodies in heaven. "Since in the city of God there will be no special friendships, there will be no strangers. All special attachments will be absorbed into one comprehensive and undifferentiated community of love" (p. 64). He thought that we will meet with others who have died, but the spiritual bodies would have the defects taken away.

> There will be female parts, not suited to their old use, but to a new beauty, and this will not arouse the lust of the beholder, for there will be no lust, but it will inspire praise of the wisdom and goodness of God, who both created what was not, and freed from corruption what he made (quoted in McDannell & Lang, 1988, pp. 62-63).

Certainly if Augustine's feelings aroused by looking at earthly female parts were unacceptable to him and in the culture he represented, then feelings aroused by the death of the corruptible body were also unacceptable. That the feelings were unacceptable, we should note, is strong evidence that he had them. If human bonds are inferior to the bond with God, then a strong response to the death of another would be an indication of a lack of faith in God, and so problematic, but again, a response being problematic means that the response exists.

Later, in the Middle Ages, with the development of courtly love, we have a human relationship that seems pure and heavenly. Love and marriage were not connected because marriage was a means for producing heirs and maintaining property. "The new fashion of courtly love allowed for a stable, loving relationship to exist beyond the marriage bonds. Never without an erotic dimension, but in its purest form without a sexual one, courtly love existed free from institutional expectations" (p. 94). In the heaven of love, God was absent. Rather the kingdom of love was ruled by the queen and king of love, an idea with more pagan than Christian roots. The Victorians would turn courtly love into family love and ascribe human sentimentality to God, but the effect on the way death in human relationships were viewed was the same. Reunion in Heaven could take on a human quality.

The value and nature of human bonds, presumably, would be different when they were regarded as eternal than when they were regarded as inferior to the eternal non-sensual bond with God, so it would follow that response pattern aroused would be different because the bonds broken by death were different.

Finucane (1996) gives us a well documented history of the way the dead have appeared to the living from classical times to the present. The book is complex, so no simple summary can do it justice, but we can see that at some points the ghost is more attached to the body than others. In some periods, the ghost is encountered mostly at the grave and at other times the ghost is so free from the body that it can float through solid walls. In some times the ghost makes demands on the living, for revenge or for proper burial rites. At other times the ghost helps the living by finding money left hidden or telling secrets that will lead to fortune. In some times the ghost is seen as an emissary from God and at other times as the incarnation of the devil. We would expect a different assessment of a death if the expectation were that it would be followed by problematic interactions with the dead than if the expectation were that it would be followed by happy interactions with the dead, and those would be different than if the expectations were that the death would be followed by no interaction with the

dead. We would also expect a different assessment of the self visited by the dead if the visit is seen as the work of God or as the doings of the devil.

Studies of the whole sweep of a particular historical period allow us to see the connections between cultural models of death and larger socio-historical relationships. Geary (1994) gives a detailed account of the interactions between the living and the dead in the Middle Ages. His dead include both common people and the saints, those dead who were emerging as the mediators between the world of God alone and the human world.

When modern Euro-American grief is put into a larger socio-historical context, we begin to see that how individuals grieve is a matter that is deeply affected by the defining characteristics of their culture. Moller (1996) puts the present model into the wider context of individualism.

> As individualism promotes the expectation that grief should be privately and personally resolved, at the same time it increased the difficulty of privately coping with grief through intensifying the emotional pain of the experience. And, in an era dominated by symbols of entertainment and pleasure, where individuals are neither trained nor equipped to cope with death or grief, the expectation that one copes with one's own grief personally and privately is deeply problematic and places an unrealistic expectation on the grieving American widow (p. 134).

Blauner (1966) said social differences in mourning behavior could be attributed to structural differences in societies. In pre-industrial society, young die more often. Death is within the family and the community, so death disrupts the social structure and adjustment to the death must take place on the level of family and community. In industrial society, mostly people die old and death is largely a matter of isolated individuals in hospitals, nursing homes, etc. Individual death does not disrupt the social system, so mourning is relegated to individuals and small family groups bound by affection. Rubin (1990) operationalized Blauner's idea by contrasting mourning customs of societies in which primary membership is in an extended family (Israeli kibbutz) and one in which primary membership is in nuclear family (modem American). She says,

In tightly knit networks, mourners identify with people outside the nuclear family, they

> are able to find substitutes for the deceased in their immediate social environment. Death is not their problem alone; it becomes one with which an entire network has to cope. Mourning rites focus on rehabilitating the damaged role system by reallocating roles in each of the deceased's social circle (p. 117).

In contrast in loosely knit networks because the social system is not affected significantly, there are no rituals for rehabilitation of survivors and consequently, the individual receives very little social support. Grief then becomes an individual's

problem and emotions that might have had a wider purpose in a small village now simply need to be vented, like the sewer gas in an industrial-age sanitation system.

Historians looking at death within the same relationship, but from different perspectives can help in the search for a cross-cultural model of grief by showing the complexity of the social interactions in which grief is experienced. Two studies of maternal bereavement in American history can illustrate the complexity of the phenomena and the contrary ways scholars can interpret historical evidence when they look through different lenses. Studying the history of bereaved mothers from colonial times to the present in America, Dye and Smith (1986, also see Smart, 1993) find that the mothers' response to the death changes over time. They find three historical periods. In the colonial period, motherhood was part of a large permeable household. Infant death was interpreted within Divine Providence. They find that these mothers detail their own activities in their journals, but until the child has passed the dangerous ages, they do not talk much of the children's personality nor developmental milestones. In the nineteenth century, reliance on God gradually gave way to a more secular belief that a child's welfare lay primarily in the hands of loving, watchful mothers. Mothers were more closely bonded to their children as mothers were increasingly isolated in households that were not permeable like earlier families. So detailed accounts of a child's personality and developmental milestones are recorded in diaries. But when a child died, the mothers still invoked God's will: "I must show my love in my resignation that she has gone to God" (quoted p. 341). In the early twentieth century, a child's death became not just a private tragedy, but a social and political issue. Mothers shared responsibility for child welfare with public health officials, the medical profession, and ultimately the State, so the death was more likely to arouse guilt and a sense of helplessness.

In their study of mother's grief after perinatal and neonatal death, on the other hand, Simonds and Rothman (1992), say that this grief at a neonate's death is a woman's experience, that the experience of maternal grief remains much the same over time, and that whether discussion about maternal grief in any historical period is allowed is a function of how much culture recognizes women's experience and listens to women's voices. Their early sources are the consolation literature of the mid-nineteenth century. After scientific advances made childhood death and emotions about death unseemly, the consolation literature seems to disappear, but Simonds and Rothman find that it continued in *True Story,* a magazine written (supposedly) by working class women and for other working class women up to the 1950s. In the modern period, beginning in the mid-70s Simonds and Rothman examine what they describe as a flood of self-help books when the experience of maternal bereavement began to be acceptable in magazines again. There are important differences between each of these three periods, they say, but the same themes keep playing. Mothers' grief does not change over time, they hold, "Mothers' grief is consistent, even though it takes

different forms over the course of time" (p. 251). What changes, they say, is the acceptability of women's voices in the formation of cultural models. "What we are doing in this book is demanding—as the consolation literature has often demanded, implicitly or explicitly—that women's experiences and women's realities be kept central" (p. 253).

IX. A BIG PROJECT AND A MODEST PROPOSAL

It seems to me that the burden of this article has been that the cross-cultural study of grief is complex because grief functions complexly in individual and community life. One easy, though expensive, way to sort out the complexity would be to do a study like Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson's (1976). As in most other scholarship, the quality of the questions determines the quality of the answers. Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson, having generated a list of attributes of grief as found in the scholarly literature of the day, asked "is it present" questions. Eisenbruch (1984a, 1984b) formulated questions to define what he thought were the issues, but his is also out-dated. But a better set of questions could be generated, and a more subtle way of coding answers could be developed. Cultural-survey research conducted with the same breadth as Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson's, though using more cross-cultural resources at the beginning than they did, is a very promising direction by which to develop a cross-cultural model. In addition to being open to models from other cultures, the survey could also focus on meta interpretive schemas, besides loss, that are used to narrate significant deaths in different cultures. If response to death, not grief, were held as a constant, if it were understood that multiple meta interpretive schemas can operate in the same culture, and if the study remained open to significant sub- cultural differences, it would seem we would likely end with a great deal more understanding of the order within the complexity than we have now.

Because we can probably expect a very long wait for sufficient grant money to do the survey of cultures, I have a more modest proposal that most scholars could begin immediately. It may be that the individual and communal response to the deaths of significant individuals is so woven into the fabric of human life that we cannot separate out one strand and call it grief. Smith (1962) finds the same problem in the study of comparative religion. Religion, he says, may be a core element of a person's life and culture, but that does not imply that there is a generic religious truth, or a religious system that can be formulated into an observable pattern theoretically abstractable from the persons who live it. To look for essences of religion, he says, is to "Platonize one's own faith and to Aristotelianize other peoples" (p. 55). He argues that we might do well by dropping the word except as it applies to personal piety ("He is more religious than he was ten years ago").

The same may be true of grief. There may be no "Grief," only griefs. Like religion, grief may not be a separate entity, but something that touches many aspects

of our inner and our social life. We may not be able to isolate one thing and say "this is grief," just as we cannot separate out one thing in a life and say "this is religion." So, the search for the universal must proceed carefully and not create a concept that we reify in a way that blocks, rather than carries forward, our understanding of human experience. As a heuristic device it might be useful to stop using the word "grief" as a universal description or category of response.

The method Smith proposes for the study of religion might be appropriate in the study of grief. For Smith, the student is never outside her/his own experience. A Muslim studying Taoism is a Muslim and a Taoist studying Islam is a Taoist. The first task, then, is a sustained endeavor to understand one's own tradition. In grief scholarship, we have been rather facile in naming the essences of grief. We have not sufficiently attended to the history our culture's meta interpretative schemas nor to how our meta interpretive schemas for loss interact with the other meta interpretive schemas (trauma, pollution, failure, revenge, autonomy, etc.) that govern our response to deaths. In our first efforts at cross-cultural study of grief we have too easily fallen into the trap of confusing the official theology of a culture with the way people actually respond to deaths that are significant to them. We have not adequately read the nuanced interaction between individual cognitive models and cultural models. We have not adequately attended to those who have little voice in the formation of cultural models, nor have we attended to the ways in which economic or political interests play out in the cultural models applied to individual experience. Our first task, then is to read our own cultural experience deeply.

The second task, Smith says, is a sustained endeavor to understand one or more traditions other than our own. If, as individual scholars, we read deeply, we are limited in the degree to which we can read broadly. If we open ourselves the data of the experience of individuals and communities using other meta interpretive schemas, then, Smith says, we will be increasingly forced by the data before us to modify the presuppositions on which the questions we first brought to our study of the other's experience. The multi-culturalist's "we" is a misplaced universal, but their goal of inclusion is a necessary context for developing a cross-cultural model. We not only need to accept that other people may see things differently. We also need to accept that the way they see their world, and even the way they see us, may be useful in seeing ourselves more clearly. The "we" that knows death can be as multi-cultural as the "others" we seek to serve.

The cross-cultural model of grief we will develop from this program will be "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), grounded not in an absolutist insistence on humanity's psychic unity, nor in an agnostic insistence on cultural relativity. If our internalized cognitive model can include openness to others, then the cross-cultural model of grief we will develop will be the externalization of our own individual and communal cognitive schemas as well as the individual and communal cognitive schemas of peoples living lives that are both the same as and different from our own.

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