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John DeFrain *Editors*

The World of Bereavement

Cultural Perspectives on Death in Families

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I Remember Your Hand in Mine: An Introduction to The World of Bereavement

Dancing Circles…
When the water flows I think of you…
And I dance in a circle…
When the water rushes by I think of you…
I hear the drums beating…
And I dance in a circle…
When the leaves stop falling in midair…I can feel you…
And I shake my rattle just for you…
When the sun warms my skin…I feel you touching my hand…
and I shut my eyes softly…
I can see you…
And I dance in a circle just for you…

-Nowch Hasik

A Native American, grieving mother from the Akimel O'othom/Pima tribe also known as the River people from Gila River Indian Community in Arizona.

Her son who died, Jacob, is Akimel Au-Authm (River People) from Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community in Arizona.

Everyone dies, and everyone grieves. But from person to person and culture to culture around the world, we express our grief in different ways, and we find ways to endure our sorrow over time, relying on beliefs, rituals, and socially influenced behaviors inherent in each unique individual and each unique culture. You are about to embark on a worldwide journey through grief, traveling back and forth in history, traversing culture, into the most intimate spaces of the human community experience.

Nowch Hasik, known as Amy, is a Pima Native American woman whose young son, Jacob, was murdered. She embarked on a journey of traumatic grief, which took her to the gallows of despair fighting a legal system that seemed to protect the perpetrators, and fails to provide a consistent, safe place for her, as a native woman, to express her grief. Her story is important to this book, as are all the stories of those who have suffered loss.

Death and grief touch each of us, and while coping with grief is an individual and familial experience, it is also a social and cultural enterprise, infused with ancient and contemporary rituals, customs, beliefs, and deeply held values. Though the basic human dynamics of grief are remarkably similar from a global perspective, each story unfolds in a unique individual, familial, cultural, and historical context.

Please let us say that again in another way: From the outsider's perspective, grief in a particular culture outside our own may look very exotic or strange or just simply wrong. However, if we can develop our skills in seeing the world from other people's vantage point, we can learn quickly that the basic human dynamics of grief are very much alike. We all suffer, and we all struggle to find a way through our suffering. And with the passage of time—and more important, with compassionate support from our *tribe* and through learning how to deal with a the dreaded tragedy of loss—we find a way, in our own time and in our own unique way, to create a satisfying, hopeful, and meaningful life built on the ashes of our loss.

To our knowledge, this book is the first of its kind to look at death, grief, and culture worldwide and from a strengths-based perspective. For this difficult task, we have over many years painstakingly assembled a team of more than 25 gifted clinicians, educators, and researchers around the world, representing all of the 7 major geocultural areas and 15 countries and cultures:

- Africa (Botswana, Kenya, and Somali culture)
- Asia (China and South Korea)
- Europe (Greece and Romania)
- Latin America (Brazil and Mexico)
- The Middle East (Israel, including Jewish, Muslim, and Christian perspectives)
- North America (Canada and Native Americans)
- Oceania (Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, including Indigenous traditions in both countries).

And culture is much richer than merely the region of residence, an ethnic background, or a religion practiced. One useful model for understanding the breadth and depth—a more broad understanding—of culture is the Cultural Building Block (Fig. 1). Because, as individuals, we exist within family systems, and as families we exist within social groups and within social groups we exist in a larger cultural region, this model can help illuminate the blocks of identity that make us, as humans, who we are.

The first block, *biological culture*, is static culture of one that is based on genes and ancestry. For example, to a large extent, genes determine our phenotype and some characterological traits and these may influence, to some degree, our lives. For example, a very tall person with natural athletic skill might have an opportunity to play basketball. Skin tones are also genetically determined and, thus, may contribute to greater acceptance—or oppression of—an individual. The second block, *familial culture*, determined by the family of origin and the culture in which it resides, is dynamic and can be slightly or significantly augmented throughout a person's lifetime, depending on social proscriptions and norms. This block is built upon the influences of geographical region, language, religion, socioeconomic

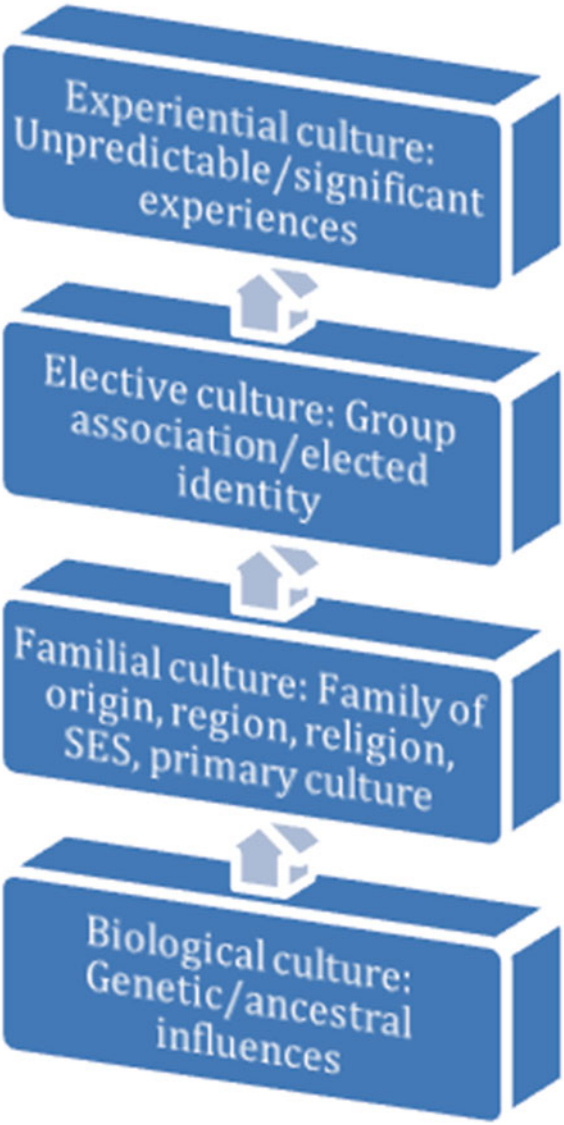

Fig. 1 Cultural Building Block model

status, and things such as cultural rituals, beliefs, and values. A child raised in New York City, for example, will likely have a different view of the world than a child raised by Aboriginal parents. The reason this block is dynamic is that some of these variables can be changed. Once the city-born child grows into adulthood, she may choose to live in a rural area, even overseas, learn a new language, or change her socioeconomic status or religious practices. Despite any changes, however, many of the influences of the familial culture are lifelong. The third block is also

dynamic in nature, *elective culture*, and relates to our chosen identity, sometimes related to a group, usually during or past adolescence and changing throughout the course of our lives. A person who voluntarily elects military service may grow to identify with military culture. The same can be said for vegetarian, political, public service, and even ethnic culture. A person born with two parents from two different ethnic backgrounds, for example, may identify more with one group than another. This would be her elected culture. Finally, *experiential culture*, the fourth block, is often static culture that is based on unpredicted—unelected—life experiences. These are often experiences that form strong ties to individual conscious or unconscious identity. Sometimes, these effects of experiential culture may be passed down from one generation to the next.

Maria Brave Heart's work on the intergenerational transmission of historic trauma in Native American groups is one example of this. Catastrophic event survivors, children raised in orphanages, child abuse survivors, victims of natural disasters, and even the bereaved have their own type of experiential culture. It is not unusual for those with strong ties to their experiential cultural group to seek like others. Often, it is because they feel they know a "secret" that others do not know. They may have a changed worldview, what Ronnie Janoff-Bulman calls "shattered world assumptions," and the kinship they may feel with like others is a powerful one. As you're reading the book, we invite you to consider this rich and nuanced model written by those who know best: those from within each cultural group.

Indeed, each chapter is written by cultural insiders—not outsiders—by experts deeply embedded in each culture. From each of them, you will learn about death and grief and how they are experienced in industrialized nations such as Australia, Canada, South Korea, and the USA. You will gain perspectives from rapidly emerging industrial nations, such as China and Brazil. You will be taken on very personal visits to countries and cultures in crisis, such as Greece and Somali culture. And, you will gain perspectives from more traditional Indigenous cultures, such as the Maori in New Zealand, Aboriginal peoples of Australia, Native Americans, and the Bakalanga tribe of Botswana.

You will glimpse into aspects of grief common within each culture and be fascinated and awed by unique individual responses human beings have to loss. Perhaps most emotionally moving of all, you will be introduced to individuals and families in each culture and see how very real human beings deal with horrific crises in their lives. Each team was asked to write about death and grief in their country or culture from a macro-social perspective, basically giving the reader the broad social and historical context, the big picture. And, they were invited to bring the tragedy of life into each chapter—and an understanding of death and grief on an emotional level. We asked the teams to find individuals and families who would be willing to share their stories of loss and how they struggled, in the context of their culture, to endure task of mourning. You will hear about rituals that may not be familiar to you, yet that carry the possibility of social cohesion and healing for many mourners. Jacob's mother, for example, makes spirit sticks for her son, as a means to honor and connect with him:

The Making…
As my hands wrap this leather around this wood
I remember your hand in mine…fingers entwined with mine…

and do you know I would jump across to the other side if I could catch you…
These four directions that I raise my hands to…
these clouds that I stare at…the wind that brushes across my skin…
it must be you…
and do you know I would jump across to the other side if I could catch you…
I hear your voice in the water that rushes by…
I see your reflection in the sun that shines in my eyes…
the beauty of it all brings me to my knees…
and do you know I would jump across to the other side if I could catch you…
The moon is shining for you and the stars light up the sky…
as I wrap your four directions into my soul…
and do you know I would jump across to the other side if I could catch you….

-Nowch Hasik

These are all heartrending stories, of course. They are stories of how parents deal with the death of a child, how men and women survive the loss of their partner, and how children endure after losing a parent. These are not easy narratives. No, in fact they are all difficult to read. But to balance the book, we also asked the teams to take a strengths-based perspective on death and grief. We asked these experts not only to describe openly and accurately the tragedy of death in the family but also to illuminate how individuals and families use their personal and family strengths, and tap into community strengths and cultural strengths, to endure, and in many cases transcend, the losses they have suffered. Everyone needs to have a good understanding of the strengths available to each of us because we use these strengths to meet the many challenges of the human experience.

You have in your hands, then, a book that is both tragic and transcendent. A book that shows how human beings struggle against the worst life can bring, and yet rising in many ways as they create for themselves a different perspective on the world and how they are to live in it. They come to see that the world is filled with love, hope, meaning, tragedy, and sadness. All are inevitable and essential threads in the fabric of life. We cannot live the way we do without death in our lives.

Sadness is the burden we carry in our hearts as we forever remember those who are gone and how much we miss them and wish they were still here with us. A sadness that will always be with us, for our loved ones will always be gone. But in honor of lost loved ones, the survivors go on in life and allow meaning and purpose to reemerge, contribute to making the world a better place, and often help others whose lives, too, are full of pain:

> My little boy would not want me to die because he died. He would want me to go on living and keep being a good Momma for the other kids.
>
> * * * * *
>
> For the first three years I attended the support group for me. I couldn't go on in life and needed help from others to make it through the day. Now, today, several years later, I still attend activities of the support group – this time to give back some of the wonderful gifts I was given, so that others can find a way to go on in life.
>
> * * * * *

> Being a father to a little boy who died of cancer is no easy thing. Every day I wake up and ask myself, "Why him, why not me?" So I work toward funding research on neuroblastoma so that other parents don't have to know this pain.

* * * * *

> When my mother died, I was 12 years old. In our culture, we continue to talk of those we love who died. So I kept a photo of her at our altar and burned incense there every day, sometimes twice a day. Sometimes when I missed her most. I'm 28 now, and I still continue this for her. It has helped me heal.

This book is for the academician seeking to understand that which is rarely explored. This book is for the clinician who works with those suffering the death of a loved one, seeking to hone her or his ability to practice culturally sensitive bereavement care. This book is for the researcher seeking to restore nuance to the pedagogy of grief. This book is for the layperson seeking to understand oneself and others in the context of mourning. This book may awaken personal grief, perhaps dormant; and it may dispel the myth of separateness as we connect to others' stories of loss, for we are not alone in our grief, even if we may think so.

This is the beauty and pain of a book about grief: We see more clearly what it is to suffer; we see more clearly what it is to truly live in the face of that suffering; we begin to understand that profound grief unites us as humans capable of profound love. Nowch Hasik, again, describes her son's murder in a way that would resonate with many mothers from many cultures around the world:

> They call me Nowch Hasik and I raise my hands to the Dam (north),
> Varco (south), Dali (east) and to the Nudnik (west).
> I buried you with you facing the sun and "below the east" where water flows endlessly.
> This is my child's story.
> This is Truth of the Wind's story you are the son of Nowch
> Hasik…you are Wuhu é Hek Hevel…(Truth of the Wind)…
> This is a story of a crazy beautiful little boy.
> This is a story of life, death, and the aftermath.
> This is a story of trauma, grief and indescribable pure love.
> This is a story I wish I never knew.
> This is a story that should never have happened.
> This is a story of truth.
> This is a story of more than one death.
> This is a story of a little boy who calls me mamma.
> This is a story of a beautiful child who I call son.
> This is a story of my child.
> This is a story of the love of my life.
> This is the story of my six-year-old old child who was brutally murdered.
> This is a story of a story of a story,
> and it's a story that will never end
> because this is the story of my son and me.

What is it about grief that helps us to recognize it in others, even others so different from us? There are countless ways to answer this question. Our answer is that we are all human beings. A common bond of humanity unites us all. We all suffer,

we all struggle, and with help from loved ones and friends, we go on living a meaningful life in honor of those who have died.

Why are you, personally, able to recognize grief in other people, even when they are so different from you? All questions that matter, all questions worth deeply contemplating.

Phoenix, AZ, USA — Joanne Cacciatore
Lincoln, NE, USA — John DeFrain

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Editors' Biographies

Joanne Cacciatore is an Associate Professor at Arizona State University where she directs the graduate Certificate in Trauma and Bereavement program, and she is the founder of the MISS Foundation, an international organization that has aided families whose babies and children are dying or have died since 1996. Her prolific research on all aspects of traumatic grief is published in many top-tier journals, she presents at conferences around the world, and her work has been featured in major media venues such the New York Times, Boston Globe, San Francisco Chronicle, CNN, Newsweek, and the BBC. The recipient of numerous awards for volunteerism, she has committed her life to helping families experiencing traumatic grief, working in direct clinical practice with grieving families around the world since 1999. In 2014, she published a mindfulness-based workbook for grievers, *Selah: An invitation toward fully inhabited grief.* Her blog can be found at drjoanne.blogspot.com.

John DeFrain is a professor emeritus of family studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. DeFrain's research on family strengths and challenges from a global perspective has been recognized around the world. He holds an Honorary Appointment as Conjoint Professor of Family Studies at the University of Newcastle, Callaghan, New South Wales, Australia; serves as a Research Scientist in the Center for Family Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, People's Republic of China; received an Onassis Foundation Fellowship to work at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece; was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji; has consulted with the Department of Family Development of the federal government of Mexico and other organizations; and has worked with the MISS Foundation in Phoenix, Arizona, and with the EMMA Foundation in Romania, helping to develop programs for families whose child has died. DeFrain is the 2014 recipient of the National Council on Family Relations Jan Trost Award, which recognizes Outstanding Contributions in International Family Studies and honors an individual for lifetime achievement in research, teaching and service to international families.

Authors' Biographies

Sarah Bain is a writer, wife, mother, and nonprofit executive who lives in Spokane, Washington. Sarah's writing has appeared in numerous magazines, journals, newspapers, and guest blogs. She writes at www.geographyofgrief.blogspot.com. **Terry Bain** is the author of You Are a Dog and We Are the Cat. He lives in Spokane with his wife, three children, one dog, and two cats. **Carver Bain** is a high school student in Spokane, Washington, whose life has always been permeated with literature. When he's not doing homework or reading, he is likely to be found in the theater, rehearsing for the upcoming school play, or working on creating videos to post on his YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/carvver, an interest since 2009. Carver is unsure what the future holds for him, but he is planning on seeking higher education after high school, likely in either language arts or film. He currently lives with his mother, father, younger sister, and younger brother. With both parents having MFAs in creative writing, Carver's interest in the arts is no surprise.

Amoneeta Beckstein's father is *Tsalagi* (Cherokee) and his mother is Israeli. He was born in Tennessee and grew up in various states. He received a Bachelor of Arts from Southern Illinois University Carbondale in Psychology with minors in Creative Writing and East Asian Civilization. He received a Master's in Counseling Psychology and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in the same field at Arizona State University. He has a strong interest in multicultural psychology, international psychology, and ethnic happiness. He is also interested in Native American mental health, leadership development, and resistance in addition to integrating traditional healing practices into modern counseling.

Zachary Bullock completed his Master's of Social Work degree from Brigham Young University in 2014. He received his Bachelor of Science from Utah Valley University and currently works in the social work field.

Eunsuk Cho is an Associate Professor of the Department of Child & Family Welfare, The University of Suwon, South Korea. She previously spent over 12 years in the USA and Canada as a psychiatric researcher and a multicultural family and youth counselor. She majored in Family Studies in Seoul National University, Korea, and completed her Ph.D. in 1997. She is a Registered Clinical Counselor of B.C.A.C.C. in Canada and a Registered Couple and Family Counselor of Korean Counseling Association. She is working on addiction and family counseling, multicultural family counseling, and family counseling for youth in crisis.

Vicki Culling is a bereaved mother whose first child died in 1998. Aster was stillborn at 10 days overdue and her brief life changed Vicki's life forever. Vicki has a BA in Education, a Master's in Social Work, and a Ph.D. in Women's Studies. She has worked for Sands in New Zealand in both paid and unpaid roles and at local and national levels. (Sands is an organization that supports families following the loss of a baby or infant.) Vicki runs a training company, Vicki Culling Associates, providing training in perinatal and infant loss to health and caring professionals.

Rosario Esteinou received her Ph.D. at Turin University of Studies in Italy. She is a family sociologist and has worked for nearly 30 years as a professor and researcher at the Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology (CIESAS) in Mexico City. She is a member of the National System of Researchers at the highest level and the Mexican Academy of Sciences. Her academic career has been focused on the family field studies, and she has tried to grasp and apply the theoretical views and findings in the fields of sociology, anthropology, history, demography, and social psychology for the study of Mexican families. Among her most recent books as an author or editor are La Familia Nuclear en México: Lecturas de su Modernidad (The Nuclear Family in Mexico: Connotations about its Modernity), by CIESAS/Porrua, 2008, with Nehring D. and Alvarado E.; Intimacies and Cultural Change, by Ashgate Publishing Ltd, United Kingdom, 2014; La Nueva Generación Social de Familias. Tecnologías de Reproducción Asistida y Temas Contemporáneos (The New Social Formation of Families. Assisted Reproductive Technologies and Contemporary Issues), by CIESAS, 2012; and Construyendo Relaciones y Fortalezas Familiares: un Panorama Internacional (Building Family Relationships and Strengths: an International Overview) edited by CIESAS and Miguel Angel Porrúa, 2009.

Maria-Helena P. Franco has worked with the Pontifical Catholic University of Sao Paulo since 1975 as a full professor in the Post-Graduation Program in Clinical Psychology. She founded the Grief Center there, which develops research, training, education, and assistance on matters related to death, dying, and bereavement. In 1998, she founded a private institute with a similar profile of the Grief Center of the university, the 4 Estacoes Instituto de Psicologia (Four Seasons Institute of Psychology), a group of psychologists who respond to disasters. Along with her experience as a lecturer and professor, Maria-Helena is responsible for advising many researchers in Brazil on matters related to death, dying, bereavement, and

palliative care, all in the scope of her own research interests. Since 1999, she has been a member of IWG—International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement. She also lectures in many places in Brazil and abroad (Portugal, Hong Kong, the USA) and authored books and articles. Maria-Helena was born and grew up in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and spent some time in England for her Ph.D. and postdoctoral research. She is currently living in Sao Paulo.

Kate Jones, born in 1952, was raised in New South Wales, Australia, the third child of high school teachers who valued education, moral living, and giving service above all else. After an unspectacular school-leaving result, she proceeded to a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work at the University of NSW, Sydney, and then immediately began work as a social worker in an agency caring for children with disabilities. Thirty eight years later, she is still employed in a major teaching hospital, caring for sick and frail aged. A spell of work in a crisis unit for homeless families in central London in the late 1970s has been her only employment outside Sydney since. Social work in hospitals, in community aged care and disability services, and in a private adoption agency involving direct work with all the parties dealing with infertility, separation, and loss have given her much job satisfaction during her career.

Theodora Kaldi-Koulikidou is a retired civil servant and former member of the administrative staff of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. She was an independent lawyer before she served at the university for 35 years. Her main positions were as the head of the Secretariat at the Faculty of Theology, head of the European Educational Programmes, and head of the Secretariat at the School of Modern Greek Language. She studied law at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and completed her M.Sc. with the same university in public law. Since 2008, she has been teaching public administration issues to civil servants in the Greek National Centre of Public Administration and Local Government. Since 2000, she has been involved in research and writing about family studies, focusing on Greek families. She is a cofounder of the Global Consortium for International Family Studies and the consortium's master's degree in international family studies. In 2011, she was invited by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to teach a course on *Greek Families Past and Present*. Theodora was born in Greece, where she lives today. She is married to Alexandros, a retired deputy director of a bank, and the mother of two daughters.

Hawa Koshen is currently working with a national university in the United Arab Emirates in an administrative capacity. She previously spent over 20 years with United Nations offices in Somalia and the United Arab Emirates. She also worked with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as a consultant on an initiative for Somali Refugees. She completed her M.Sc. at Bristol University in 1997 in Development and Administration and Planning. Her research interests focus on gender and families in the context of the civil war in Somalia. Hawa is ethnically Somali; she was born and grew up in Zimbabwe and resided in Somalia as well as the United Arab Emirates. She is currently living in Dubai with her family.

Gordon Limb is the Director of the School of Social Work at Brigham Young University. He completed his Ph.D. in Social Welfare from the University of California at Berkeley, his MSW from the University of Utah, and his Bachelor's of Science in Psychology from Brigham Young University. His primary research area involves examining policy and practice issues that impact Native American families and children, with much of his research efforts focusing on American Indian child welfare issues. He has published numerous articles in social work's leading journals. His practice experience includes working with adolescents in a wilderness survival program, as a clinical social worker at a social service agency, and as a counselor at a community college.

Anne N. Lutomia is a Ph.D. student in Human Resource Development, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She has an M.A. in Nonprofit Management from Hamline University, Minnesota, and B.A. in French and Education from Kenyatta University in Kenya. Her research focuses on Nongovernmental organizations in relation to women's work and transnational Africans. Her Ph.D. research is on career development of immigrant nurses.

Pania Mitchell is a social worker and whanau (family) support worker with Te Korowai Aroha in Porirua, New Zealand. She is a mother to four; her second child Manaia lived for 2 days and died in 2008. Pania is passionate about supporting families following the death of a baby or child and about raising awareness of pregnancy, baby, and infant loss. Pania provides training on grief and loss in her local area and has presented at national and international conferences. She is a board member of Sands New Zealand and a committee member of Sands Wellington-Hutt Valley.

Francine de Montigny, R.N., Ph.D., has been a professor at the University of Quebec in Outaouais (UQO) for the past 25 years. Holder of the Canada Research Chair in Family Psychosocial Health, she is the Director of the UQO's Centre for Studies and Research on Family Health Intervention, the At the Heart of Families Labs, and the Regroupement sur la santé mentale des hommes en période périnatale et les services de santé à leur égard (Coalition for men's mental health and services in the perinatal period). Her research interests focus on the mental and psychosocial health of individuals and families during the perinatal period and on the bereavement trajectories of women and men experiencing perinatal death, including early deaths such as miscarriages and abortions, and services for them. In line with these themes, she directs the DEPART Project (Deuil périnatal, accompagnement, ressources et trajectoires—Perinatal bereavement, support, resources, and trajectories) and the Fausse couche a l'urgence (Miscarriage in the ER) Project. As a clinician, for the past 15 years she has accompanied parents through perinatal bereavement and subsequent pregnancies and has co-led, among other things, the Les étoiles filantes (Shooting stars) bereavement support group with Chantal Verdon. Together they direct the Interregional, Intersectoral, and Interdisciplinary Committee on Perinatal Bereavement, which received the Award of Excellence from the Outaouais

Order of Nurses in 2013, in recognition of the improvements made to care and services for bereaved parents in this region of Quebec. Finally, she is the author and coauthor of numerous publications on birth and bereavement, notably the book *La naissance de la famille, accompagner les parents et leurs enfants en période périnatale*, published by Chenelière in 2012.

Kory McGrath is a funeral director, student midwife, and research assistant in the Midwifery Education Program at Ryerson University.

Alina State Mihaela is currently a psychologist in private practice in Braşov, România. Her primary experiences are working in the County Emergency Hospital, for the Army, and for the National Security and Safety. She participated in many selection missions of the military staff for external missions (Irak, Kosovo, Afghanistan) and also in their evaluation on coming back from their missions. She worked as a volunteer on psychological counseling issues with a foundation called Catharsis, a foundation which supports people with social vulnerability and adopted children. Her volunteering activity continues now with the Romanian branch of the MISS Foundation, EMMA Braşov, providing support and specialized assistance to parents who have lost a child. After graduating at the Faculty of Psychology and Pedagocics, University of Bucharest, she completed her master's degree in Psychological and Educational Counseling, and she also attended the Training School of Adlerian Psychotherapy, within APPAR Association Bucharest.

Lynn M. Mwaniki has M.A. in sociology from the University of Central Missouri. She is a Lecturer in the Sociology Department at Kenyatta University and teaches Gender Studies, Aging, Social Psychology, and Social Dynamics. Ms. Mwaniki is also pursuing a Ph.D. degree, and her dissertation research focuses on Relapse Prevention of Heroin Addicts at The Coastal region of Kenya.

Jane Rose M. Njue, PhD., Certified Family Life Educator, is an Associate Professor of Family and Child studies in the School of Family Consumer and Nutrition Science at Northern Illinois University. She is also coordinator of the Family Social Services Program. Her research focuses on the application of Family Strengths Perspective to study family functioning in Kenya and internationally.

Shen Qin is a doctoral student majoring in Family Science in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Shen was born and raised in China. He was trained as a chemist and now he is devoted to Family Studies, ready to put his passion and skills into practice while serving families and youth with needs. Shen likes research, teaching, and also extension. He believes each provides a unique approach to secure and promote the well-being of today's families and children through knowledge advancement, dissemination, and application.

Dr Msimanga-Ramatebele holds a doctorate from the Duquesne University's Executive Counselor Education and Supervision (ExCES) program attained in 2008. She also holds a master's degree in **Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing** from the Queensland University of Technology in Australia. Currently, Dr Msimanga-Ramatebele is teaching at the University of Botswana at both the undergraduate and graduate programs in Counseling and Human Services. Outside her work, Dr Msimanga-Ramatebele offers psychological counseling on a voluntary basis to individuals and organizations that need such services.

Dorothy Rombo PhD., Certified Family Life Educator, is an Assistant Professor of Child and Family Studies in the Department of Human Ecology, SUNY College at Oneonta. Her research focuses on the well-being of vulnerable populations, especially women and children, and application of theory on the same population.

Chris Sharp is a Project Coordinator at the Office of American Indian Projects, within the School of Social Work at Arizona State University. He works primarily with Native American communities and programs in research, evaluation, and technical assistance capacities and serves as a mentor and advisor to Native American students. He earned his B.S. in American Indian Studies, Master of Social Work, and Master of Public Administration at ASU. He has extensive experience working for and with Native American tribes and tribal populations in Arizona and throughout the USA. He is of the Mohave tribe and a citizen of the Colorado River Indian Tribes.

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Part I
Africa

Chapter 1
Death, Grief and Culture in Kenya: Experiential Strengths-Based Research

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The fact that every human must die makes beliefs and practices around death an important window into a culture. In Africa in particular, events related to death are especially important because entire communities are called upon to participate when a community member dies (Jindra & Noret, 2011b). We shall begin with our constructionist view of bereavement. We then provide an overview of Kenya's colonial history. We will then provide our conceptualization of death, bereavement and mourning and then turn our attention to what sub-Saharan African scholars have written focusing as much as possible on Kenya. The review will be followed by a thematic analysis of the mourning and grieving process of three Kenyan individuals who lost loved ones. The international family strengths model will be used to

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identify individual, family, community, and societal strengths that were instrumental to the mourning and grieving process. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of bereavement and mourning the Kenyan context with implication for professionals working internationally.

A Constructionist View of Death and Bereavement

A great deal of scholarly writing on grief and mourning is written from the point of view that there are basic similarities to how humans experience grief (following death of a loved one) across cultures, that cultures differ among each other regarding the customs and outward expressions of grief, and that studies of grief and mourning within a culture can determine that culture's template for grief and mourning. This view is rooted in a psychological view of human behavior that assumes that there are essential truths waiting to be discovered. In contrast, we share Rosenblatt's (2001, 2008) view that human grieving is malleable and that its expression within any "culture" varies considerably from one person to the next. From a social constructionist perspective (Rosenblatt, 2001), culture itself is constantly evolving, as is our understanding of it that we derive from social science research. Each bereaved person and each observer of a bereaved person actively constructs a story about the death, its personal meaning and meaning to the group, the degree of separation that the death entails, and so on. Each person and each culture, Rosenblatt reminds us, is filled with contradictions and ambiguities and is always evolving. This picture of individual variation emerges as we view grief from close up, for example, if we asked ten members of our own cultural group to describe their own experiences and feelings within weeks or months of the death of a close family member.

However, Rosenblatt (2001, 2008) also reminds us that when viewed from afar, some patterns seem to emerge that distinguish grief reactions in different cultures. For example, death may be seen as a complete and final separation of the deceased from the living, or it may be seen as simply a changed relationship. Furthermore, the meaning of a death is constructed by the bereaved, perhaps shaped by the cultural context. In the mid-twentieth century United States, the death of their own newborn, for example, was considered insignificant by some bereaved parents within a particular cultural sub-group. Other bereaved parents whose newborn died around the same time regarded their own loss of a newborn as tragic (Smart, 2003). Cultural beliefs about death and grieving also can have multiple layers, as is evidenced in many African cultures which have traditional beliefs and practices overlain by Christian beliefs and rituals (Jindra & Noret, 2011a; Rosenblatt, 1993).

A dominant Euro-American view of grief is that it destroys an individual's assumptive world, or a set of beliefs that exists within the mind of the bereaved person (Parkes, 1972). For example, an individual's assumptions about the world being a just place are shattered by the death of a loved one, particularly if the death is untimely or harsh (Wortman & Silver, 1992). This individualistic model fits well

within Western culture that privileges the individual over the group. This twentieth century intrapsychic approach also divided grieving into normal grieving and pathological grieving. It assumed that grief should come to a resolution, an end, that that a person should return to "normalcy." The individual achieves the resolution through individual "grief work" (Parkes).

Nwoye (2000, 2005) responded to the Western intrapsychic model of grief by providing his conceptualization of grief, bereavement, and mourning in Africa. He argued that African cultures provide "patterned ways and rituals that heal the psychological pains and wounds of bereaved persons" (Nwoye, 2000, p. 60). Specifically, communities come together to mourn with the bereaved, providing recognition and support for the loss of the role that the deceased played both in the community and for family members and others who are more intimately affected by the death. The community-based rituals help bereaved persons to resolve grief through a deliberate, but facilitated process of reimagining a positive life map after the death of a family member. It is our view that many other cultures (including those in Europe and North America) also provide support at the community level through ritual. Nwoye correctly underscored the importance of community support (Jindra & Noret, 2011b) that has been central in African communities. Nwoye's theory of bereavement and mourning asserts that the loss to the community is just as important as that of the family and also makes central the community's role in healing. Euro-American theories look first at the individual's loss, and then at the community's. Intrapsychic approaches such as Parkes (1972) also make central the individual's role in his or her own healing, rather than the importance of the community in healing both the individual and the group. There is evidence that social support upon death is also present in Euro-American traditions. For example, an Irish wake involves a party and bereaved Jews traditionally sit *shiva* for a week, during which friends and more distant relatives call upon the mourners and provide them with food.

Macro: Overview of the Kenyan Context

In non-Western traditional societies of Africa and Asia, the rights of the social group are paramount, and the concept of a person as a separate individual is absent. In sub-Saharan Africa, the community's needs come before individual rights and privileges (Venter, 2004), and a person's humanity exists because of his or her relationships with others in society (Nafukho, 2006). Community support therefore depicts *Ubuntu*, an African philosophy, spiritual foundation and way of life that indicates the relatedness of everyone in the community through showing each other care, empathy, kindness, and humanness (Bangura, 2005; Mbiti, 1990; Nafukho, 2006).

Kenya was a British colony between 1890 and 1963. Prior to and throughout much of the colonial period, Kenya's population consisted mostly of subsistence farmers and pastoralists. It currently has more than 43 indigenous ethnic groups as well as minority groups from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (Ngige, Mburugu,

& Nyamu, 2004). The cultures, economies, and health of sub-Saharan Africans have been under considerable stress since the era of European colonization. In their efforts to exploit natural and human resources, the colonizers disrupted traditional cultural practices both directly and indirectly (Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990). The first half of the twentieth century was a time of worldwide economic and cultural changes, with economic depression, two world wars, changes in land use, and political upheaval. The British Empire was at its height, but its decline was beginning. In Kenya, British administrators and Christian missionaries worked hard to change many practices that they deemed inappropriate such as polygyny and the religious practices of indigent populations (Jindra & Noret, 2011a). After Kenya obtained political independence from Great Britain in 1963, efforts to build a prosperous independent nation were impacted by internal corruption and the defunding of Africa by capitalists (Ferguson, 1999; cited in Cattell, 2003). Other changes that began at the turn of the twentieth century continued to accelerate through the century and beyond. Land use and economic changes separated men from their families when they left rural areas to seek work in the city. Urbanization has resulted in the separation of individuals from communities and hence disrupted traditional support systems.

Historical Implications of Loss/Trauma in Kenya

Starting in the 1980s, HIV/AIDS has become a prominent cause of death in Kenya, bringing stigma upon the deceased and their family members as well as a challenge with regard to grief and mourning. HIV/AIDS related deaths have led to more individuals leaving written wills in order to protect orphans from greedy family members. Traditionally, wills were verbal and followed traditional customs. The experience of children who have lost parents to AIDS is distinctly different from experiences of orphans whose parents die from other causes (Cluver, Gardner, & Operario, 2007). However, the depressive symptoms of Kenyan HIV/AIDS orphans who perceived that they received social support experienced less severe mental health problems than those without social support (Okawa et al., 2011). Nzioka (2000) found that Kenyans viewed dying from AIDS as very dishonorable, as it was associated with promiscuity. People who died from HIV/AIDS were seen as ineligible for "life-after-death" because of the sinfulness of their death. In African societies that believe that the dead co-exist with the living, an HIV/AIDS death is seen as permanently separating the deceased from ancestors and descendants, according to Nzioka.

Religion and Spirituality

The traditional African belief is that after humans die their spirits continue to live (Mbiti, 1969, 1975). A human life is not regarded as being a unique individual, but rather, it is seen as part of a community. The community therefore participates in

celebrating the key points in a person's life journey such as birth, marriage, and death (Mbiti, 1975). African religious practices were altered when Islam and Christianity, known collectively as world religions, made inroads within Kenya (Jindra & Noret, 2011a). Both Islam and Christianity require burial of the dead, whereas some Kenyan tribes previously abandoned dead bodies outside the village so that wild animals would dispose of them. The Kikuyu of Kenya, for example, provided burial for only a few of their dead, namely, people who died in old age and who had earned a certain status (Droz, 2011). Dying children and dying adults who had not reached a certain level of accomplishment within the community were taken outside the village and watched over until they died. Or, if an individual died unexpectedly at home, a hole would be cut in the back wall of the dwelling and the corpse would be walled off from the rest of the building. A wild animal would thus be enabled to enter the area that held the corpse, and the body would be carried off. Dead bodies were regarded as unclean and should not be handled by the living. To touch the dead body would anger spirits and would gravely endanger the living (Peterson, 2000).

Appalled British administrators and Christian missionaries, who applied pressure to institute universal burial of bodies, changed traditional practices of disposing of the dead with amazing efficiency. In August 1934 (just 44 years after Kenya became a colony), the traditional council members of the Meru tribe passed a resolution compelling their tribesmen to bury all bodies (Lamont, 2011). Lamont pointed out that it was not the council members' idea to do this, and that Meru women vigorously opposed burial, concerned that the spirits of the deceased would cause environmental catastrophes such as drought, famine, and epidemics.

Conversion to Christianity went hand-in-hand with adopting a more "modern" lifestyle (van der Veer, 1996, cited in Jindra & Noret, 2011a, p. 17). It is a mistake to think of conversion purely in terms of spirituality, however. The adoption of Christianity also upset the old social order, creating new elites who demonstrated their status through conspicuous consumption, including elaborate funerals. Burying corpses within the family compound became a way to demonstrate land ownership in rural areas, but growing urban populations did not have this prerogative, so Christian burial in urban cemeteries became an alternative for urban residents who lacked ties to land at home (Jindra & Noret, 2011a).

Peterson (2000) has demonstrated that colonial efforts to change the "natives" were met with resistance and that the results were not uniform. Christian and older beliefs and practices continue to co-exist according to Droz (2011), who found that among the Kikuyu, it was common to believe that the spirits of the dead go to Christian heaven, but that the spirits also stay behind with the living, intervening in their lives. Although Christian cemetery burial became acceptable, at the same time, there remained the risk of derision by one's community members, according to Droz. The paradox of coexisting beliefs demonstrates that cultural change is more like the incomplete mixing of swirls of paint in a bucket, rather than what happens when green walls are painted yellow.