

REHEARSAL FOR SURVIVORSHIP:  
A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF LATER LIFE HUSBANDS AND WIVES

by

Ann Henderson Martyn

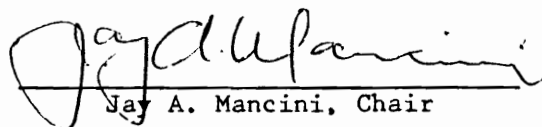
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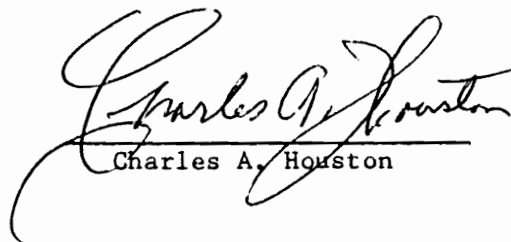
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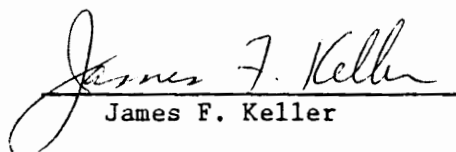
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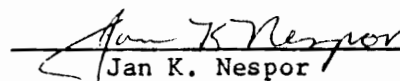
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Ann Henderson Martyn

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Family and Child Development

(Abstract)

A review of the literature on adjustment to widowhood and survivorship reveals gaps in qualitative and quantitative studies which explore anticipatory processes for this expectable life event. Studies focusing on men anticipating this time of life are rare to non-existent. This is a qualitative study on the anticipatory processes (cognitive, emotional and behavioral) of individuals and couples. The theoretical underpinnings for the study are drawn from symbolic interactionist ideas of how individuals settle on a personal and functional reality and from the ideas of Peter Berger and his associates on how the marital conversation stabilizes the individual's sense of the world. Fourteen long-married couples ages 50 to 80 were interviewed. They are Caucasian, middle and upper-middle class people, married from 29 to 49 years. The first part of the study examines the following: whether people have a prediction relative to which of the couple will probably die first; whether members of the couple hold the same prediction; what factors inform such a prediction, and how much discussion there is of this topic. It was found that about one-half of the informants have a stable prediction and that three couples held the same view. Three typologies, the CLEARs, those IN PROCESS and the VAGUES, were used to describe the prediction behavior of the 28 participants. Among the seven factors highlighted were the sense of one's genetic inheritance, belief in the

"common wisdom" that husbands pre-decease their wives, and observations of one's own energy level relative to one's partner. The second part of the study explores the worries and concerns of men and women as they look forward to a time without the life partner. The study uncovers the actions they take at present and actions they believe they would take in the future to best perform daily routines and to deal with emotional and relationship needs. It was found that the men and women envision their futures differently, that men anticipate the likelihood of remarriage and tend to see remarriage as a pleasant coping strategy. Women show a disinclination to remarry emphasizing the trade-offs of marriage. Their strategies are more varied, and are more likely to be based on observations of widowed women throughout their lives. Finally, the participants' religious and philosophical attitudes, broad enough to encompass death and loneliness, are noted.

## Acknowledgements

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The last prospect of our working life is death; we must look at it. If death frightens us, how is it possible to take a step without anxiety? The strategy of the unthinking is to not think about it. .. People come and go, they scamper about, they dance without news of death. That's all fine; but when death comes whether to them or to their wives, their children, their friends .. what despair overwhelms them.

Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)  
from Que philosopher, c'est apprendre a mourir

## REHEARSAL FOR SURVIVORSHIP:

### A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF LATER LIFE HUSBANDS AND WIVES

#### CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW

##### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the ways in which older married men and women, ages 50 to 80, cognitively, behaviorally and emotionally rehearse for the possibility of a time in their lives when they will be without their life partner. The study explores the tension of couples who acknowledge the prospect of loss while living interdependently. By means of direct questioning and by permitting the informants to elaborate their responses, the interviews explore the strategies employed by older individuals as they plan for a life apart.

The goals of the study are to render a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of this process, explore the extent to which people's cognitive processes reflect those conceptualized in the literature. The goals are, moreover, to generate hypotheses, while elaborating or extending existing theory.

##### Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1) Do older married individuals have a "life plan" (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1973, p. 78) or at least a prediction relative to which of the couple will probably die first? Does a joint plan exist?

2) What are the factors that form the basis of the individual's or couple's life plan or imagined future?

3) What worries and concerns do the informants express, and what strategies do they use to address them?

### Theoretical Frameworks

The intent of this inquiry is not to directly test existing theory. Generally, however, the questions asked in this study reflect a symbolic interactionist perspective, insofar as this set of ideas emphasizes the constructed, emergent, and open-ended nature of experience, persons, and social life (Lofland, 1976), and the importance humans place on the ability to anticipate the future (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1973).

Symbolic interactionism includes a wide range of concepts and sub-theories (Burr, Leigh, Nye, & Reiss, 1979). For this reason it is useful to cite relevant premises drawn from specific figures who articulate theory categorized under the rubric of symbolic interactionism. The theorists from whom this study draws are George Mead, as explicated by Chappell & Orbach (1986), and Peter Berger and his associates.

The theoretical topics relevant for the study are 1) the way in which the individual constructs his/her personal reality, 2) the way s/he influences and is influenced by continuous intimate conversation in marriage, and 3) the way in which s/he is influenced by the wider social reality.

### Individuals Construct a Personal Reality

The following ideas are drawn from Chappell and Orbach, 1986, pp. 83-95.

First and foremost, human beings are active, not passive; they actively create their reality by means of their interpretations of circumstances and meanings they attach to situations.

Humans learn the perspective of others and thus learn to adopt different perspectives. (This ability is referred to as "role taking" in Burr et al., 1979). The self is not static. It is not an unchangeable set of attributes. It is rather a process guided by the mind which has the ability to be self-conscious, selective in its adaptations, and purposive in its conduct.

A situation requiring action may require modified patterns of response which may also require a new perspective or meanings. In the present, there is continual emergence of the new, of novelty. This necessitates a continual process of re-constructing meanings and re-organizing perspectives.

The present is the locus of reality throughout life. We reconstruct our past from a personal and particularized view of the present; as new perspectives arise, we re-construct different threads of our history. Just as we extend back from the present by way of memory, we extend from the present to the future in anticipation and forecast. The anticipated future provides a guide and helps determine our courses of action. The future exists as alternate possibilities, and it is the individual's conception of the present that informs his/her range of anticipations.

It is the process of thinking through possible futures which enables a person to determine his or her actions. Mead likens this process to the adoption of a "working hypothesis" used by the experimental scientist, in which the individual continually tests and reformulates provisional futures.

Mead theorizes that the individual's ability to cope is tied to both the human and financial resources upon which the person can draw and the ability to reconstruct meaningful and productive perspectives.

#### Individuals Construct a Stabilizing Reality within Marriage

The following ideas are drawn from Berger and Kellner, 1964, pp. 1-14; 73-75.

Society constructs, maintains, and evolves a consistent reality. Individuals validate some of it and reject some of it. Individuals need personal validation to maintain consistency in a reality recognized on some level to be both ambiguous and relative.

Individuals seek people who inhabit a similarly constructed world. With these people, the reality of the world is sustained through conversation. In everyday life we validate our reality with speech.

Marriage occupies a privileged status among the significant validating relationships for adults in our society. In the marital conversation a world is not only built, but it is also kept in a state of repair. The subjective reality of this world for the two partners is sustained by the same conversation. The "nomic instrumentality" (p. 13) or topics and perceptual distinctions of marriage are concretized over and over again, from bed to breakfast table, as the partners carry on the endless conversation that feeds on nearly all they individually or

jointly experience. It may happen eventually that no experience is fully real unless and until it has been jointly talked through. Each partner's definitions of reality must be continually correlated with the definitions of the other. Marriage posits a new reality. The individual's relationship with this new reality, however, is a "dialectical" one; s/he acts upon it, in collusion with the marriage partner, "welding together their reality" (p. 12).

Berger, Berger and Kellner (1973) posit that individuals develop a "life plan" (p. 73). In long-range planning the individual not only plans what he will do but who he will be. In the case of individuals who are of great personal importance to one another, these projects overlap, both in terms of planned careers and planned identities. One individual is part of another's projects and vice versa. The family and especially the marital relationship occupy a privileged position in such project-sharing. Such life planning presupposes a specific temporal mode. There is a predominance of "in order to" motives over "because of" motives. That is to say, the meanings of everyday life derive from future plans.

#### Individual Realities are Influenced by the Wider Culture

Again these ideas are taken from Chappell & Orbach, 1986, pp. 82-91.

Mead's definition of a role is that it is not the enactment of a set of expectations but a perspective. This perspective is generated by the individual through conversation, by attaching meanings to situations, and by incorporating shared expectations about values and behavior. The larger society provides sanctions which restrict the individual's freedoms in some instances; still society is not static.

Each role in the marital situation carries with it a "universe of discourse, broadly given by cultural definition, but continually re-actualized in the ongoing conversation between the marital partners" (Berger & Kellner, 1964, p. 21).

#### Conceptualization of the Rehearsal Process

Considered here is rehearsal behavior. This process includes anticipation and preparation. To anticipate is "to foresee and do beforehand" (Webster's, 1960); to prepare is "to adapt for a particular condition, to make oneself ready" (Webster's, 1960).

The process of rehearsal has emotional, cognitive, and behavioral elements. Lindemann (1944) described women, who had no certain knowledge of the husband's status at war, who worried, repeatedly imagined scenarios of the husband's death, feared the husband's death, imagined what they would do, and finally, imagined themselves able to adjust. When their husbands returned, the bond between them was completely broken. These are ways in which people may emotionally and cognitively prepare for a possible, undesired outcome, but as Lindemann pointed out, the effect may not always be benign.

Along these same lines, Janis (1958, 1971) examined the role that "the work of worrying" plays in helping a person adjust to a stressful situation. Janis suggests that warning about the problem situation may induce a moderate amount of fear, which in turn may serve as a motivator to think through the situation, and thus, emotionally prepare for it. This can be termed an "emotional-cognitive" process. Mead would add here that the coping person may evolve new perspectives and meanings in order

to create a future reality that will be meaningful (Chappell & Orbach, 1986, p. 94).

Rimm and Masters (1979) suggest a more concrete step in preparation for a problem situation. They describe the processes of "behavioral rehearsal" (p. 93) wherein a person actually begins to acquire, develop, and practice those skills and role competencies necessary for successful negotiation of the difficulty.

The study at hand will elicit the emotional-cognitive processes, behavioral rehearsal processes, and shifts in meanings and perspectives as people prospectively envision their possible future without their life partner.



## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Related Concepts in the Literature

A review of the literature indicates there are several concepts pertinent to the research questions. A number of concepts relating to the process of preparing for and adapting to survivorship are summarized here: "anticipatory grief" (Lindemann, 1944), "forewarning" (Eliot, 1946), "anticipatory bereavement" (Gerber, 1974); "anticipatory socialization" (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978; Burr et al., 1979), "rehearsal for widowhood" (Neugarten, 1973, 1977), and "reconstruction of the self-concept" (Lopata, 1973a, 1975, 1986). These concepts serve as guides to what is certain to be a complex and rather private, prospective process of older people.

#### Anticipatory Grief

Lindemann (1944) described "anticipatory grief". His concept was based on observations of several parents, children, and wives of survivors of World War II. He described the process of one wife which included depression, heightened preoccupation with thoughts of the husband in service, fantasies of his death, and thoughts of adjustment to it. He noted that some women appeared to mourn their husbands to such a degree that when the husbands returned, in some cases, they had essentially broken the emotional bond. He observed that possibly the distance upon reunion could not be bridged. As Lindemann described it, the activity of anticipatory grief seems to have a damaging, or at least uncertain, effect on the affective bond between the wife and her absent husband.

### Forewarning

Eliot (1946) described the effects of "forewarning". His work focused on grieving widows during World War II. He proposed that partial shocks, or pre-bereavements, characterized by the husband's leaving home for boot camp, partings after furloughs, and final leave taking before overseas duty, might have served as a rehearsal. The belief was that such "forewarning", or emotional partings, feelings of loss and then adjustment, could serve as a partial defense against the shock of actual death.

### Anticipatory Bereavement

Gerber (1974) argued that Lindemann's (1944) concept of anticipatory grief did not include the process of anticipating the social role one would assume following the death of the loved one. He introduced the term "anticipatory bereavement" to include the deliberations of the soon to be bereaved person about his or her future role.

He speculated that these plans are "lightly considered" until significant others are approached and respond to the person's ideas. He argued that the responses of others signal the soon to be bereaved as to the appropriateness of his or her thoughts. Gerber's (1974) concept is related to "anticipatory socialization" and indeed might better be conceived as "anticipatory socialization to widowhood" (p. 28).

### Anticipatory Socialization

Anticipatory socialization is a process of learning norms, values, attitudes, and subtle dimensions of a role before being in a social situation where it is appropriate to behave in that role (Burr et al., 1979, p. 84). Most girls have exposure to the example of a mother

within the home. Through books and the media there is ongoing "latent role learning" (Burr et al., 1979, p. 85). Implicit is the idea that much is learned through observation and imitation.

Exposure to useful learning opportunities varies from person to person. Useful preparation for marriage and parenting is available to some extent in our society. Preparation for other roles such as bereavement is much rarer (Burr et al., 1979, p. 85). Role changes that are either unexpected or undesired are typically preceded by little preparation. It was suggested by Cottrell (1942) cited in Burr et al. (1979), that a low incidence of exposure to anticipatory socialization hinders the ease of transitions. It was further suggested that the positive effects level out after some moderate degree of anticipatory learning, and that a high amount of anticipatory socialization does not ease a transition more than a moderate amount of preparation. Burr et al. (1979) point out that no standardized measure of anticipatory socialization has been developed.

#### Rehearsal for Widowhood

Neugarten (1968) states that anticipating the death of the spouse is a normal concern of middle-aged women. In her interviews with 100 men and women ages 40 to 60, there was considerable concern among the men over their personal health. "Body monitoring" was the term used to describe a range of protective strategies men use to maintain the middle-aged body at given levels of performance and appearance. Neugarten (1968) viewed men as becoming sensitive to their "physical vulnerability" during mid-life (p. 96). Aware of their husbands' concerns over the shifting capabilities of their bodies, women "rehearse

for widowhood" (p. 96), and concern themselves with their husband's health more than their own.

Neugarten's inference seems to be that signs of physical slowing down in the husband erode the wife's sense of enduring, physical security. Under subtle threat, the wife makes it her task to promote her husband's physical stamina and health. In so doing, she maintains her own physical security for as long as possible.

Another issue in mid-life is a different sense of time and the future. Rather than "time since birth", the middle aged person develops an awareness of "time left to live" (Eissler, 1955). Neugarten (1977) states that with this awareness of time, women rehearse for widowhood and men "rehearse for illness" (p. 638).

#### Reconstruction of the Self-Concept

Lopata (1986) uses a symbolic interactionist term, "reconstruction of the self-concept", to describe what she found to be a necessary and final stage of successful grief work for widows (p. 696). She found that widows of marital relationships wherein friends, social networks, interests, and activities were shared were most in need of this reconstruction process. She found that more highly educated couples shared more and communicated more, and it was this segment of widows whose identities were most disrupted by the death of the spouse (1973a, 1973b).

#### Extent of Warning and Adjustment to Survivorship

Glick, Weiss, and Parkes (1974), whose sample was men and women under age 46, found that the presence or absence of forewarning of eventual bereavement was of "enormous importance" in determining the

course of recovery over the 13 month period studied, though "we are still uncertain why this should be so" (p. 13). The findings were somewhat different for women and men. Women who had no forewarning were likely to be phobic of remarriage. Men who had no forewarning were likely to remarry, but were likely to experience anxiety in the marriage and work-related difficulties. Clearly, their sample was one whose bereavement happened "off time" (Neugarten, 1968, p. 28).

Carey (1979), studying widows and widowers ages 28 to 70, found that warning was important to the widows, but not to the widowers, and Ball (1977), who studied 80 widows ages 18 to 73, found that after age 45, warning had no mitigating effect. Maddison and Walker (1967) studying 132 young and middle aged widows, and Clayton, Halikas, Maurice and Robins (1973), studying widows and widowers whose average age was around 60, uncovered no relationship between forewarning and adjustment. Clayton et al. (1973) excluded people who had lost their spouses with less than six days warning and assumed that those whose spouses were sick up to four years had experienced anticipatory grief more fully than those whose spouses were sick between six days and six months. The measure of adjustment was depression levels after 13 months and the two groups showed no essential differences. This study and one by Gerber, Rusalem, Hannon, Battin and Arkin (1975) suggests that while researchers may label certain processes as anticipatory grief, others might instead observe a readiness as a result of exhaustion as the caretaking process lengthens into years.

What occurred in the adjustment to widowhood literature was an assumption that some unspecified but salutary anticipatory processes

occur (or do not occur) based on the time between forewarning and death (Ball, 1977; Maddison & Walker, 1967; Carey, 1979). The assumption of inner processes was based purely on the period of time between onset of the spouse's last illness and actual death. In Ball (1977) and Clayton et al. (1973), these processes were assumed to have taken place if the survivor had six days warning; they were assumed not to have taken place if the survivor had less than six days warning. None of the studies took into account the fact that a wife might have done preparatory rehearsal work independent of the presence of a terminal illness or diagnosis.

#### Adjustment to Loss and Preparatory Processes

Lindemann (1944) described the defensively motivated emotional-cognitive processes of young women in peril of losing husbands in war. In the face of uncertainty, a wife's strategy was to prepare for the worst. He observed cases, in which even though the husbands came home, the wives had "successfully" mourned them. Eliot (1946) studying people whose husbands had in fact been killed, hypothesized that the loss might have been made easier by the repeated rehearsals involved in partings.

For the next 40 years researchers interested in the severity of grief reactions and factors associated with successful adjustment to widowhood assumed forewarning was synonymous with preparations for the loss. Unfortunately, until 1987, no further work was done on the actual emotional, cognitive, or behavioral processes involved in rehearsal for loss of the partner.

Fulton and Gottesman (1980) note that anticipatory grief and adjustment to loss are both complex subjective experiences "not particularly amenable to quantification" (p. 48). The article underscores that there has been no uniformity in the operational description of anticipatory grief, nor in its measurement.

Remondet, Hansson, Rule and Winfrey (1987) made a major contribution when they developed measures and used them with women widowed up to 42 years to document retrospectively both cognitive and behavioral rehearsal behavior. This work distinguished three behavioral and cognitive processes: taking action, planning/deciding, and social comparison. The analysis compared level of adjustment against a) the three types of behavioral and b) the cognitive processes.

Scores on the index of cognitive rehearsal were not significantly correlated with any of the three behavioral processes. Higher scores in all the behavioral rehearsal domains were associated with positive adjustment. Taking action was associated both with decreased emotional disruption and and increased positive adjustment. In contrast, high cognitive rehearsal scores without high behavioral rehearsal scores were associated with increased emotional disruption. Surprisingly, length of forewarning was unrelated to cognitive rehearsal and only marginally related to behavioral rehearsal. Finally, a moderate period of forewarning did not show a predictable rise in adjustment.

Remondet et al. (1987), therefore, offer some evidence that women use their imaginations, construct alternatives, and actively plan for undesired transitions independent of a prognosis of certain death.

Although the empirical research is scant, there are a number of theoretical orientations that predict the benefits of behavioral rehearsal for smooth negotiation of transitions (see Remondet et al., 1987, for a review of pertinent theories).

### Qualitative Studies of Related Topics

Although no qualitative studies of the process of rehearsal for life without the life partner appear in the literature searched to date, there are qualitative studies on the topic of strategies used by aging people to manage their lives. Matthews (1979) explored how friendships are developed and maintained. Lopata (1973a) looked at ways in which identity is preserved after the death of the mate. Wentowski (1981) looked at how elders regulate the personal exchange of services. In this tradition of studying strategies (Lofland, 1976, 1978), this study will focus on the strategies used by couples to manage this tension of planning for an undesired life event.

### Variables

#### Age

The informants for this study are couples married at least 25 years, whose younger member is at least 50.

#### Age as a Delineating Variable Between Couples

Chronological age is one way to characterize and denote certain things about a person. Neugarten (1968) noted the extent to which men and women describe themselves as "early", "late", or "on time" with regard to family and occupational events (p. 23). Eissler (1955) noted



that at some point, many people fix an approximate age at which they believe they will die. They thereby arrive at an internal projection of "time left to live". Sociologists often anchor certain individual processes to the place the individual occupies in the family life cycle or occupational career.

This study looks at fourteen couples whose ages span three decades. On analysis, an age variable will be cited only if the data indicate it is meaningful.

#### Incidence of the Aged Planning for Future Crises

Three studies appear in the literature relative to the incidence of elderly people anticipating and planning for crises. Heyman and Jeffers (1965) surveyed a population of 180 in which the median age was 72. One-half of the population expressed no concern about the future. In answer to the question concerning plans for a long-term illness, one in four said they had made no plans of any kind; two in three said they had made some financial plans for the future; one in twelve had specific plans for either housing or nursing care.

James (1964) surveyed a population of Canadian senior citizens and reported their general lack of concern about the future. Kulys (1983), surveyed 60 unmarried people over 70, 24 men and 36 women. All were able to function independently and all were responsible for themselves, and none were determined to be in crisis. Kulys found her population to be disinclined toward planning for future crises concerning health, living arrangements, and finances. She described planning styles using four typologies: the Secure, the Concerned, the Overwhelmed, and the Fatalistic (p. 3).

### Age as a Factor in Adjusting to Bereavement

The literature indicates that the most elderly population manages widowhood with less emotionality and more somatic illness than younger groups. Parkes (1965) associates geriatric patients with inhibited grief reactions. Widows in the older age group show a different type of reaction to bereavement, with less emotional disturbances than in younger widows.

Stern, Williams, & Prados (1951) in Montreal, sampling an indigent population described grief reactions in persons over 53 (1 male and 23 females) and found there was a tendency in this group toward self-isolation, and a preponderance of somatic illness precipitated or accentuated by the bereavement. Maddison (1968) studied women 39 to 55 and found the younger widows had a more difficult adjustment. Carey (1979), whose sample of widows had a median age of 57, found those over 57 were better adjusted after 16 months of bereavement. Lopata (1973b) reported among her 301 widows, those who reported least problems with widowhood were those over 80 and black, who did not think highly of their husbands. None of the studies used a common, objective measure of adjustment.

### Gender

#### Gender Differences in the Experiences of Widowhood

The difference in the experience of a man or a woman relative to bereavement is likely to be influenced in fundamental ways by the sheer ratio of widowed men to widowed women and, further, by the fact that widowhood is, to some degree, an "expectable" life event for most women and not so for most men (Martin-Matthews, 1987). The ratio of widowed

women to widowed men in the ages 55 to 64 is 4.9 to 1. The ratio in the ages 65 to 74 is 5.1 to 1. For the very old, those over 74, the ratio is 3.1 to 1 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1983). The median age of widowhood for a woman marrying in 1890 was 53. The median age of widowhood for women in 1990 is 56 (AARP, 1989).

The adjustment for women to widowhood may be an easier transition because of the subtle orientation to it through same-sex widowed friends both prior to and during their own widowhood "who may serve as role models and offer social support" (Martin-Matthews, 1987, p. 348). For many men, remarriage is an option. Widowed men tend to remarry at a rate 8.5 that of women (Brubaker, 1985, p. 22; National Center for Health Statistics, 1983). Stryckman (1982) found in Canada that widows and widowers equally identified widowhood as a painful life event. For men, the pain of it was associated with a desire to remarry; in women, it was linked to a desire not to remarry (Stryckman, 1981).

Some debate exists about whether women or men have the harder time adjusting to bereavement. The more practical issue is determining what areas of adjustment each gender finds particularly difficult. Berardo (1970) finds that isolation is common among widowers. Lowenthal and Haven (1968) note that men may be socially disadvantaged because of their tendency not to develop relationships outside of their marital relationship. In Canada, Stryckman (1982) found loneliness to be the major problem of widowhood for both men and women. Lack of financial security was the second most pressing problem for the women in the study, and the completion of household tasks and concerns with sexuality were the next most pressing problems for the widowers.

### Unique Dimensions of This Study

This study will look at the rehearsal processes of married women and married men relative to prospective widowhood. This topic has not been the focus of in-depth inquiry since Neugarten (1968) noted the phenomenon in women ages 40 to 60. The joint processes of older couples looking to their future have not been a focus of any study, nor have men's intimations and anticipations relative to prospective widowerhood been explored. In the literature that presumes rehearsal behavior, only one study done in 1987 actually measures the behavior, and it required its widowed sample to recall events typically 10 years (and up to 42 years) past. No study has explored or measured rehearsal behavior prospectively.

Discussion of gender and age-related differences in bereavement and adjustment will lend interest to some of the findings, but the heart of the study is to document the variety of ongoing rehearsal processes which have until now only been presumed to occur.

### Questions Raised In The Literature

Isolated case studies from the World War II period and recent work by Remondet et al. (1987) lend the firmest direction to the investigation. Lindemann's research causes one to wonder whether anticipatory grief or deathtaking from a loved one occurs in other than times of war and forced separations. Remondet's (1987) work causes one to wonder if the behaviors recalled in retrospect were done with the specific intention of preparing for widowhood. The absence of men from her sample causes one to wonder whether men anticipate loss in the same

way. The inconclusiveness over whether anticipatory processes facilitate the adjustment to bereavement has led me to investigate the range of this inferred but unspecified phenomenon.

## CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODS

### Obtaining the Sample

The initial plan was to locate willing couples outside my acquaintanceship. I contacted Elder hostel at Roanoke College, New Directions, the organization of faculty and staff retired from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and Friendship Manor, a retirement community with independent living arrangements in Roanoke. None of these agencies were able to accommodate my request, although one contact yielded an incidental volunteer.

In all, 41 couples were contacted and 14 gave their consent. The first couple to consent were acquaintances of mine. They were enthusiastic about the project and gave me names of eight couples they felt would be appropriate and willing. Of the eight names this couple gave me, three consented to the interview. Often one member of the couple would consent, but the criteria was for both to consent. Husbands and wives declined in about equal numbers.

When it was clear that couples were reluctant to be interviewed, it seemed preferable to locate people who knew me and who might on the strength of trusting me consent to the interview. Five additional couples whom I know consented. Friends supplied names of their parents, church acquaintances, and former employees. Three couples came from these suggestions. The League of Older Americans contacted couples, two of whom consented, one of whom met the criteria.

One always wonders about those who choose not to participate. Some gave their reasons:

My wife's mother just died last week. It wouldn't be good timing.

One woman whose husband has nursed a cancer which is now in remission said:

It's not something I think about. It doesn't relate to me.

One couple responded to my request letter in writing:

We are declining your request to include us in your study. Actually, we haven't made any plans for widow/er/hood. We both have had experience with widowed parents, so we no doubt have some notion about your subject. Long life to us all.

Another couple considered my request over a month's time. Finally the wife telephoned and said that over the years she had nursed her daughter, who had had a bilateral mastectomy, that she had had cancer, and that recently her husband had lost a very dear friend. She felt they were simply too fragile to undergo the interview.

Their reasons for not participating indicated to the interviewer how protective people can feel of themselves and their mates, and how painful it can be to raise the issues under study, and how assiduously some people may avoid contemplation of death and the prospects of making a life without their life partner.

#### Description of the Sample

In all, 14 couples participated. All were Caucasian although an attempt was made to locate Black couples as well. All the couples live in Virginia with the exception of one couple who are Irish and live in Ireland. The couples live in Northern Virginia, Charlottesville, Roanoke, Salem and Blacksburg. The Irish couple was interviewed provisionally. Their responses seemed very much in line with the other

couples', so they were included in the analysis. Each couple was unique in some way. The Irish couple has more children and more grandchildren than any other couple, and they mention their children frequently as they anticipate their futures.

Five couples in their fifties participated. (Two of the five were comprised of the wife in her mid-fifties and the husband in his early sixties.) These couples have been married from 28 to 39 years. Of the four couples in their sixties, one was a wife of 63 and a husband of 72. These couples have been married 39 to 44 years. The five couples in their seventies have been married from 44 to 49 years.

All the participants have at least one child. Eight couples have either one or two children. Two couples have five children and one has six. Ten of the participating couples have grandchildren, but only two have great grandchildren.

Of the nine husbands who are retired, their mean age of retirement was 59. The occupations of the men retired and not yet retired are personnel manager, corporate lawyer, food manager, librarian/archivist, mechanic, inventory specialist, middle manager, real estate salesman, physician, engineer, college professor, railroad employee.

It is harder to describe the women by way of their occupational roles. All but one were for some period of time out of the work place and putting their efforts full-time into their homes and families. Six of the women worked outside the home less than seven years during their marriage. Of these one is currently in training to return to her earlier profession as a nurse, and one worked eight years after the husband retired. Of those whose earnings were needed for the family economy, one



woman worked almost all her married life in restaurant work until she was 60. Other occupations represented are teaching, nursing, office or store work, human relations consulting, and sewing. The women typically did several kinds of work in the work force. The men typically did the same type of work or stayed with the same company all their working lives.

Twenty-three of the participants are affiliated with a certain church or a disciplined religious life. The affiliations represented are Episcopalian, Church of the Brethren, Society of Friends, Buddhist, Greek Orthodox, Catholic, and Unitarian. One couple turned away from their Baptist affiliation when their church would not support their full-time volunteer work. They are still devout but not affiliated. Another couple left their Methodist church recently and are seeking another church. One woman ceased her practice as a Catholic some years ago.

Twenty of the twenty-eight participants finished college or had education beyond the baccalaureate level. Six participants completed high school, and two completed the tenth grade.

#### Interview Process and Procedures

The contact with the couple began with a letter or a telephone call followed by an explanatory letter. A sample explanatory letter is found in Appendix A. Sometimes two or three calls were necessary to sufficiently inform the prospective couples about my purpose and the kinds of questions they might expect.

I left the meeting place up to the couples, offering my home, their home or anywhere secure and convenient for them. I was invited to the

homes of all but one couple who preferred I interview them in the husband's office.

In most cases I took the couple a token of thanks which consisted of homemade bread or vegetables from my garden. In all cases the couple were sent letters of thanks. Seven couples asked for the transcript. Their request was honored.

Often the couple interviewed me for 15 minutes to an hour before signaling their readiness for the interview to begin. Some seemed to be looking forward to the interview as a time to focus on issues of importance. Others seemed to be submitting to a painful process in order to honor the request of their friend, my contact. Others who knew me personally seemed curious about how they stood with respect to the other couples. They seemed fully engaged with the process and enthusiastic about helping me complete my degree.

Each husband and wife was interviewed separately for about an hour and fifteen minutes. Four couples were additionally interviewed jointly.

The plan to interview all the couples jointly was abandoned for two reasons. The joint interview seemed quite intrusive for couples who were evasive and unformed in their opinions in the private interview. Sometimes the interviews occurred on different days to accommodate the schedules of the couple. Interviewing the couple jointly would have required a third visit to their home. When both were interviewed during the same evening, prolonging the interview meant staying past a reasonable hour.

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim and saved to disk and on hard copy. The interviews ranged in length from one to three

hours and the transcripts ranged from 14 to 47 pages. Interviews with men and women ran approximately the same length. The longer interviews were typically with people whose thoughts were unformed, people who seemed fearful of the topic, or people who simply were carrying emotional issues and who were pleased to have a listener. A consent form was signed by each member of the couple and a copy was left with the couple in the event they wanted to re-contact the interviewer or request a transcript of the interview. The Consent Form is found in Appendix B. The Human Subjects Review committee requested I include a provision assuring the interviewer would not share the confidences of one spouse with the other. The Human Subjects Review Committee also suggested the interviewer offer the possibility of a follow up session if the interview raised troubling issues for either of the couple. These provisions appear in the Consent Form.

The interviews began with demographic information including information about the respondents' parents and children, retirement status, length of marriage and more. This Data Collection Sheet is found in Appendix C.

The interview was semi-structured. The Interview Guide, found in Appendix D, was the core of the interview.

### Interview Method

The approach to the interview and the analysis is based on Spradley's (1979) methodology. Spradley (1979) outlines the use of Descriptive, Structural, and Contrast questions. A descriptive question samples the terms used by the participant to describe his or her world.

Structural questions identify categories and their relationships to one another. Contrast questions identify terms or taxonomies within categories. Examples of each kind of question are found in Appendix E. The use of contrast questions proved particularly helpful.

#### Analytic Procedures

The guide questions evoke direct answers, experiences, stories, ruminations, and observations. Specific incident statements provided material for the first level of analysis. Examples of specific incident statements relative to guiding questions are supplied in Appendix F.

Statements containing original terms or categories of thought were either noted in notebooks or coded in the computer copy of the transcript. This step is tantamount to Spradley's taxonomic analysis. (Appendix G gives an example of the taxonomic analysis proceeding from specific incident statements.) Subtle forms of information, for example, the words people used to describe their spouse dying, were entered into notebooks. Direct answers to the research questions, for example, all worries, strategies, and all versions of life plans were coded. The coded statements, for example, all the worries, could be searched with the use of ZYINDEX (1986), a search and match software program usable in a computer which has a minimum memory of 520K. Such searches of terms took from a half hour to four hours.

The terms were then noted in notebooks so that their relationships could be studied. Spradley (1979) offers nine rules of relationships (p. 111) to guide this process, and they are noted in Appendix H.

Relationships between and among terms and categories of thought were analyzed. An example of this level of analysis is given in Appendix I. Themes within couples became clear. As the analysis proceeded, larger themes among the couples emerged. Spradley (1979) offers the following definition of a cultural theme:

I will define "cultural theme" as any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning (p. 186).

In summary, four levels of analysis were conducted. First, specific incident statements were collected. Second, incident statements were examined for terms and categories of thought relative to the research questions. These were noted and coded. The coding categories emerged only as patterns in the statements occurred. As new patterns became clear, codes were dropped, added and merged. Each interview was checked three times for accuracy and consistency. The final codes and explanations appear in Appendix J. Third, relationships between and among the terms led to low level abstractions and descriptive statements, and finally, cultural themes, or general statements across individuals and couples, emerged.

## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The first question addressed below is whether people hold stable ideas about which partner may die first. During the interviews, it was in many cases easy to detect if a person had stable ideas of this kind. Occasionally the amount of contradiction and the extent of qualifiers in the respondent's so-called "clearest statements" left me uncertain. For this reason, it was necessary to come up with an objective approach to discriminating which and how many of the 28 can be said to have a clear idea of their likely future.

Those 14 who are designated as having or revising clear ideas are further characterized. The many factors people weigh into the prediction are explained, thereby addressing the second research questions about what factors go to make up answers to the question: Who do you think will more probably die first, yourself or your mate?

The three couples who have consensus in their ideas are designated CONVERGENTS and are further characterized in order to highlight couple interactive processes.

The last part of Chapter IV addresses the third research question. The worries and concerns people have about being the survivor are described. The focus of this section is the ways people anticipate handling this time in their lives.

## The Bases of Future Predictions

### Varieties of Images

I began the interviews with the premise that there are two possible mental images people can hold about their conjugal futures: that one will be the first to die, or that one will be the survivor (the one bereaved). A third mental image came from several participants. It was discovered that some people firmly believe the probability is 50/50, that weighing out the factors, the scale remains untipped. Having carefully considered the evidence, they believe it is a toss-up as to who will die first.

There was a question from the outset whether many people actually carry around stable mental images or intuitions about this. The answer is that some people do. It is conservatively determined that 12 of the 28 people in this study have a stable idea of who of the couple will more probably die first. Two others have at one time had a stable image, and are in the process of revising it. The study reveals that just as some go through anticipatory processes for widow or widowerhood, others go through anticipatory processes for being the first to die. Such anticipatory processes extend even to prospects of one's last illness, being a patient in the hands of one's beloved or not so beloved, one's funeral, and even one's moment of death. This study focuses only on anticipatory processes connected with surviving the spouse.

Some people make statements about their mental image with great certainty:

I expect to go first. Let's put it this way, I have a strong possibility that I will go first.(W)

I have a strong sense that I will die first .. I would rate it about an 85% chance that she will survive me by some years.(H)

(H = husband and W = wife. Such designations are given with excerpts when the sex of the speaker is not obvious from the text.)

There were others who were contradictory, vague or who seemed to be thinking about the question for the first time:

Oh, I'm going to outlive her, but not really. .. I mean who knows?

He keeps telling me that, you know, his health problems are such that this could be. But who knows. I might have a problem and would leave him. So, I don't -- I think we just have to face those things as they come along.

There was another category of response, a considered one, where the premises and actions were explicit but in both directions. Some actions posit the wife will die first, others posit the husband will die first; still others posit a toss-up scenario. This category of person is deemed to be in flux or in process on the matter.

In the end, three types of people emerged: those with a CLEAR view of who will probably die first, those with a VAGUE or unformed or contradictory view, and those whose view is IN PROCESS, or actively under revision.

It was useful to distinguish those with a CLEAR view. The discrimination was made in the following way. I selected five behaviors coded in the narratives, that if present, would support the conclusion that a certain individual has a clear, operative mental image relative to who will die first:

1. the presence of a clear statement of a probable future scenario relative to the death of one partner and the survivorship of the other, or relative to the equal likelihood each had to be the first to die.



2. standing jokes or joking statements reported by either spouse which posit one spouse surviving the other or which posit either's death as equally likely.

3. reports by either spouse of an action which supports a certain scenario.

4. reports by either spouse of conversation during which a probable scenario was discussed.

5. evidence that the mental image has been considered deeply, thought about consistently over time, or that it has been revised from a previous view.

Evidence of these five behaviors was located in the coded narratives using ZYINDEX. The excerpts were studied and logged in a way that made tabulation possible. The premise of the behavior had to be clearly a) husband will die first (H1), b) wife will die first (W1), or c) it is a toss-up; it is equally likely each will be the survivor (TS).

A person might have given up to a dozen "responses" to these five criteria. Anyone whose ratio of responses in a single direction was at least 4 to 1 was accepted into the category of having a CLEAR scenario. That is, if three out of four of their logged behaviors on the five indicators posited the same outcome, they were viewed as having a CLEAR scenario.

The decision was made to exclude from this category those people who volunteered fewer than three statements relative to the five indicators. In other words, if an image appeared consistent but if it were based on only two statements, I took the view that there was not enough information to support a claim that a clear scenario was formed. These people were characterized as having a VAGUE scenario.

Nineteen of the participants fell easily into the CLEAR and VAGUE categories. Two other researchers were asked to review the data on the

nine remaining. A third category became apparent: those whose mental images are actively undergoing revision. Those participants are categorized as IN PROCESS.

Typologies: Description of the CLEARS,  
the VAGUES, and those IN PROCESS

CLEARS

The CLEAR group members are occasionally contradictory or qualified in their remarks, but the weight of their statements falls to a single direction. Five believe they will die first, five believe their mate will die first, and two believe, in a considered way, that each outcome is equally likely.

The CLEARS distinguish themselves in a number of ways. They freely admit they have imagined their future. They seem to feel the interview questions are relevant to their lives, even if painful to contemplate.

Seven of the CLEARS recount personal actions that jibe with what the study shows to be their operative premise. Nine of the twelve make statements that show they have revised their point of view or that they have taken this perspective over a long period. Ten of the twelve give a simple, unqualified clear statement pertaining to their mental image of who will die first.

Most interesting, relative to couple communication, ten of the twelve report a joke made about who was going to die first, and all CLEARS report that they or their spouse have talked about one of them dying first. What emerges is that the most salient indicator that a mental image of the future exists is its being mentioned, talked about, or joked about with one's mate.

## VAGUES

Turning to the VAGUE group, most notable is the fact that only two of the fourteen VAGUES report a running joke or joking statement between the couple relative to who is going to die first. Five have mentioned their prediction to their mate.

Eight VAGUES make clear, relatively unqualified statements of their belief about which of the two will probably survive the other, however, only two VAGUES make statements evidencing a change in their thinking or any depth or duration to their thinking, and only four have taken some kind of preparatory action for one or both outcomes.

One characteristic of the VAGUE group is that there is not enough volume of demonstrable behaviors to support their occasional clear statements. Some of the VAGUES tend to question the interviewer about whether people actually think about this area. Others refer to a higher authority as the keeper of this information. Some deny thinking about this area and deny its relevance to their lives. Two showed impatience with my questions.

Here is a sampling of responses from the VAGUES:

I wouldn't have any idea. I wouldn't have any idea. I don't know what you base anything like that on. Neither of us has any terminal illness or anything. We're both healthy.(W)

It has crossed my mind. But I never have dwelt on it to any depth at all. We're both going to live forever. All I hope is that I do not have a lingering illness. I would like to just go to sleep and die. I don't want any part of it; actually I've had it on both sides. (Both parents had long illnesses before death).(H)

Well naturally you think about it. .. I know I'm a couple of years older than he .. Well, that don't always have it. I always just pray about it. .. I think it is in God's hands and it's just something nobody could tell. I had this friend ..

She married a very nice person and he's much older and she took such good care of him and she was so afraid that something might happen to him, but she didn't think about dying. And she worried about him so much that her blood pressure got real high and she died. So you see, it don't do any good to worry about it. She just should have been praying about it. But it has to be God's will. When you're praying, you always say it has to be God's will.(W)

### IN PROCESS

The IN PROCESS group, two women, are marked by the fact that they volunteer plenty of statements relative to the questions, but the statements are multi-directional. They are engaged in the interview process and both have evidently given deep thought to the matter. Each admits to having once had a more settled prediction.

One woman, who is changing her view, at one time believed that she would die early. Her health as a young mother was very poor and she had little physical strength. Her grandmother, to whom she was very close, died prematurely. She adopted the view that she too would die early. She had communicated this to her husband. He continues to believe that is her view. Now in her fifties, she has better health and stamina than ever before. As a result, she no longer believes what she used to believe.

My grandmother was very much a mother image to me, and it was not until my grandmother died that I really developed a mother-daughter thing with Mother. So it was my grandmother's death that set a lot of notions in my head that probably would have been at my mother's death if it hadn't been the relationship I had with my grandmother. And since she died when she was fairly young -- I don't know how old she was. but I thought she was young -- I just sort of figured I wasn't going to live very long. I had several rounds with tumors and cysts and a lot of ill health in my 20s ... I was pretty convinced I probably couldn't keep up like this for very long. I just became fatalistic about it. The older I get, the less fatalistic I am. That is a for sure thing. .. I just know I don't think what I used to think.

The other IN PROCESS participant makes relatively frequent jokes about her "next husband" and labels her husband's absences on volunteer missions as her "practice for widowhood". She is nine years younger than her husband, feels for him to die first is the "order of things", but she recounts a situation within her own family which has a compelling effect on her thinking:

My older sister died. She had cancer. [The man my sister married] was 15 to 16 years older than my sister. She always assumed that she would live longer. And, in fact, I think was kind of looking forward to widowhood, when she would do all this traveling. Her husband did not like to go anywhere. I think that's when I really came to the realization that, shoot, it doesn't matter the age difference. It doesn't mean a whole lot. That's a statistic that you can twist around.

The IN PROCESS group members are actively involved with thoughts relative to the prediction of which will survive the other. Their thinking has the same intentional quality as the CLEARS.

The next section explores the narratives of the 14 CLEAR and IN PROCESS participants who actively and intentionally reflect on which spouse might die first. The factors which inform the thought process are summarized and illustrated with specific incident statements.

#### Bases of the Prediction of Who Will Die First

The CLEARS and the IN PROCESS group verbally weigh a number of factors and circumstances to arrive at beliefs about the future. Seven factors and circumstances or categories (Spradley, 1979) appear with some regularity in the narratives. They are listed below and each is illustrated with a specific incident statement.

#### Factors

a. Own and spouse's current health and energy levels

Also, I look at her, I feel that she gets tireder and seems to have less energy than I do at the same age level. I think there is something to genetic energy. I don't know what it is.

b. Own and spouse's health histories and personal health habits

I tend to think he will [die first] because he's a smoker. .. but the smoking as regards his health, I'm always aware of that connection, and that's why I think he would die first.

c. Age difference between the couple

I would expect that as long as he stays healthy he'll live to a pretty ripe age, but being seven years younger, I would think that he probably would pass away before me.

d. Own and spouse's family's histories of disease (including siblings, parents and grandparents)

I have some high blood pressure; this is hereditary. My dad had this type of thing. I do feel that I have had some cancer in my family, that type of thing. So the possibilities or the tendencies are there for one of those types of things. .. She has these nagging situations but nothing life threatening and I have the history in my family of the cancer and the heart situation. Those are what I think make that determination.

e. Own or spouse's parents' or grandparents' reputation of longevity or energy levels

Like I say, you have time, how long? Ten more years? My mother lived to 89 (father to 60) and my grandfather -- oh, since I've had the heart condition, I don't know .. But my grandfather, who was an E -- , lived to 97 years old. And my grandmother, his wife, lived to 94. My dad's side, on the M -- side of the family -- he had four brothers who all died when they were 60 to 65 years old. I don't know what my heritage will be -- whether it will be E -- or M --. So far I've outlived most of my father's brothers. So I must be leaning more on the E -- side of the family as far as longevity is concerned. Her father died when he was 78 years old. Her mother died young [52], but her sisters are still living. They are older than she is, and if she don't have any more recurrence of cancer .. she might live to be a good age.

f. "Common wisdom" that wives outlive their husbands

Well, I just thought in all my growing up that the female would outlive the male.(H)

We probably planned, or I have planned, that I would be the first one to die because I'm seven years older than she is, plus statistics say she is going to live four years longer being a female. So that's an 11 year period.

g. Anecdotal evidence or serendipitous observations

I have known so many people whose wives have died before they did. In the case of B -- and E --.  
E -- was something like 22 years younger than B -- and she died first.

These are the pieces of "evidence" people cite as they foretell their futures as a couple. Additional analysis reveals that other considerations fuel this predictive process. Personal predictions about life expectancy and other subtle reasonings which enter in are described below.

Bases of Predictions about Life Expectancy

It appears from the narratives that those people who speak with the most clarity and conviction are also the people who predict an approximate age they expect to reach, or, in some cases, not to reach. It may be that deep thought about which of the two partners will die first is often preceded by deep thought about one's own life expectancy. If one demurs in the face of forecasting one's own future, it is hard to arrive at a rational or intuitive weighing process to determine which spouse will die first.

An additional set of factors can be used to predict one's own life expectancy or age at death quite apart from one's sense of who in the couple will probably die first.

One factor relevant to one's personal prediction of life expectancy is one's self-image as a constitutionally strong or weak person.

Certainly the excerpt used earlier in this text of the wife who states her illnesses as a young person predisposed her to a "fatalistic" view of her future illustrates this, as does the following quote from a 75 year old woman:

I had the cancer .. I think it was an unrelated incident. I don't think because my mother had it I fear the hereditary factor of it. I think things happen. .. I just feel that I am a strong person. I'm well and I take care of myself.

This overriding view of herself as a strong person clearly informs her vision of herself attaining an advanced age.

A second factor supporting a conviction about one's own life expectancy is the strong, in these cases, positive, identification with a parent or grandparent coupled with a belief that one has inherited a specific genetic legacy from that person.

My father is extremely hardy and hail. His father lived to be 96, and all of his family were long lived. .. I am like my father. My father was a sickly child and then was very strong and never sick or anything. I was a sickly child and since I married I have been healthy. [My husband] on the other hand his mother died when he was 64. She had been an invalid for 20 years. He keeps thinking that for every year he has lived beyond 64 is .. borrowed time. I think he has felt that ever since he passed his 64th birthday.

This wife's husband said:

..when I think of myself on turning 80, I'm astounded that I have lived so long.

A wife in her fifties said,

You know I think I am very much like my mother, and she lived to be 82. .. I'm planning to live until I'm 82.

Finally, a husband nearing his 79th birthday said,

I've been thinking about [death] this year more than ever before. It's like my doctor said, this is an anniversary year. .. My father died at 79 and that's what I told him. It was accidental. It was unfortunate. He was plenty physically able



to live a longer life. He was preparing to go downtown on the bus. .. He was going to the post office downtown. .. Anyway, that's the reason I've been concerned or morbid or giving it more consideration at this time than ever before.

Observation about one's parents may inform one's projections of one's life span. A person may recall the parents held a belief that one or the other would die first and organize certain behavior in reaction.

I: Your view that you will probably die first, it seems you arrived at that view primarily in light of your own health.

W: Yes. And modeling by my own parents. My mother talked about her death 20 years before she died. It used to bother me. She was terrified she'd die of a stroke. She made herself older than she was. She was a tremendous person with lots of interests, but she was very preoccupied about death. The last ten years of her life we rehearsed the funeral and who got what. .. So that couldn't help but influence me.

Another clue to how a parent's projections can influence the adult child may be found in the following excerpt.

W: Mother knew Daddy would die first. Mother knew it and Daddy knew it. And they knew it. It was not thinking it. When he was in his 20s he developed diabetes. In those days insulin gave you a limited life span. .. As insulin improved, he didn't believe that things changed. He was already convinced that he was going to die early. He was told in his 20s he wouldn't live to see me grow up. .. He lived a lot longer than he thought he had coming to him. That's the way Mother looked at it too.

I: So they developed a viewpoint and --

W: And lived it out.

I: Does that have anything to do with your toss up idea?

W: I never connected the two before. I have not seen H. have a physical problem that would tell me for sure he is going to die. No one has said to either of us, "You're only going to live a certain amount of time." And if anybody did, I'd smack 'em.

It is interesting to note that children have indeed observed their parents foretelling events. There is a hint here that some adult

children attempt take note of this behavior in their parents and attempt to avoid some of their perceived errors. Some see parents who sanguinely rehearse protocols for nursing the spouse in the last illness, for funerals, and for reading the will. They may take comfort in the orderliness of events rehearsed. Others may see a premature decision made and an untimely disengaging from life and resolve not to repeat such. They may avoid predictions as limiting.

### Bases for Accepting or Revising Predictions

#### Relative to Death or Survivorship

Some participants cite rationales for either accepting their own death or being relieved from its worry. One man in his fifties recalled when at 35 he had fathered two children, he felt life had been good to him and he could envision himself accepting death at that age. A woman, the mother of several, now a grandmother, said she so hoped she would live to see them all raised. She imagined herself being able to accept her own death at the point they were all raised and educated.

More directly relevant to this project are those rationales people use to change their predictions of death and survivorship. It is possible to revise one's predictions of who will die first. One man had. He has lived all his adult life with a congenitally high cholesterol level. He was told before he married that he could not expect to live to 35. The hematologist doing the blood work required for his marriage license expressed surprise that he was going to get married. He and his then fiancée discussed his prognosis he said, "I didn't want to impose an invalid from heart disease or stroke on her, or impose a short time

knowingly." In this man's case he has seen to his health, is trim, energetic, and according to his wife until this year, had never missed a day of work.

He has gone from believing he would die first to now firmly entertaining a toss-up scenario. Of his change process, he says this:

Just a gradual evolving. As you get older, you have lived this long, you feel okay and don't have any real reason to .. I try to keep up with my health, so I don't have any reason to think that I'm going to die. I don't plan dying at this stage. .. I think that the fact that her mother died (at 82 but suddenly after a physical which said she was in excellent health) .. all that would tend to equalize it down. Also as I look at her I feel that she gets tired and seems to have less energy than I do at the same age level. I think there is something to genetic energy. I don't know what it is.

Another man, who has a clear mental image that he will be the first to die, seems to be moving toward revising his prediction, which has been largely based on the observation and actuarial data that few men survive their wives. This man is about to outlive his father who died at 79. He has outlived the expected life span predicted by actuarial tables. He says this:

H: That idea (that he would probably die first) was really formed when I was able to think of it in a financial way more than any other way. My first obligation was to prepare for it. If I died first then have it so that W. would be taken care of, and that, that's been some years. That's when I set up a trust, in 1967, and it wasn't the first time I thought of it, but it's the first time I did anything in a material way which was a very small way, but it was a beginning. Twenty two years ago...

I: But then after the financial things are in place and as you both get older, then you're more on a parity.

H: Well, to a certain extent your thoughts are relieved of the matter of financial responsibility. That way your thoughts are not bound by anything, and it's, just as you said, on a parity.

Having endorsed the culture's prescription of the man's role as provider for wife and children, and having made a serious commitment to himself to fulfill that role, this man began planning for his wife's widowhood in 1967. He realizes he has seen to his family's needs during his lifetime. He realizes also that he has carefully laid a protective financial plan which after his death would support his wife in the style to which she has become accustomed. His narrative seems to say that now that he has fulfilled his role, he is free to disagree with the culture's prediction that he will die first.

Bases for Reaffirming One's Predictions  
in the Face of New Evidence

Some may make such intricate plans for pre-deceasing as to become fixed in this belief and feel disappointed if this is not the case.

Put it down that she would get two-thirds of the equivalency of my retirement. I've got enough life insurance to make up that one third. If she would invest that, it would bring it back up to that level. Her social security would increase up to two-thirds of mine so she would take a slight decrease, but not much in the cost of living.

This man takes pride in his financial plan and his approach to this expected phase of life. There is some indication that his self-image depends on his predictions coming true and the plan running its course. This man manages employee benefits and retirement programs for a large institution. He gives another indication why his prediction of dying first may be emotionally comforting:

If I outlive my wife then I'm as well off as [she financially]. ..Emotionally would be a different situation. She can probably handle it much better than I can. .. The things that I do for her other than being a life partner I think she should adjust

to very well, much more so than I could to the things that she does for me.

Some predictions may be reinforced by their emotional appeal. Clearly, this process of prediction is not a purely rational one.

### Behavior of Couples who Hold Identical Predictions about Death and Survivorship

Couples who hold the same view of who will die first will be called CONVERGENT couples. Of the 14 couples, three were CONVERGENT couples; they agree on their prediction of who will die first. Of the three couples, one predicts the wife will die first. The other two couples believe the husband will die first. These three couples are designated both CLEARS, people who have a clear mental image of who will die first, and also CONVERGENTS because their life plans agree or converge. Next is a discussion of the behaviors of this sub-group associated with their co-creating a mental image of their future.

Overall, CONVERGENTS directly communicate their predictions and find that the partner sanctions their sharing feelings. This is a sampling of statements from the CONVERGENTS illustrating this directness:

All things being equal, I just feel that there's a fairly good likelihood that I will go first. And I feel that is important for us to talk about.(W)

.. H. sort of feels this way too because he is always saying that I am going to outlive him.

On the other hand, the statements from the five couples where both partners fell into the VAGUE group, have a very different flavor from the CONVERGENTS. Their statements are more along these lines:

Well, both [my husband] and I know that we're not going to live forever and, in fact, we will die. There isn't any real need to talk about it.

This statement is from a wife, 66, whose husband is also 66.

W: I suppose we have talked briefly about it. It's nothing we have dwelled on.

I: So it's not a topic of much conversation?

W: No, it really isn't.

The CLEAR/CONVERGENTS tend to share feelings without reserve.

It kinda gets to me at times. Particularly when he starts talking about it a lot, but then I get to thinking, "Gee, I guess I am lucky that he has thought this much".

Let's put it this way, these types of topics, W. and I talk about a lot.(H)

The VAGUE couples distance themselves from the topic and approach the topic more impersonally by speaking to their partner through the particulars of an acquaintance's situation.

Talk? Some, not much. I've tried to talk to him, but .. not too much. I think sometimes we act like we're not going to die.

We don't talk to each other about our situation at any great length. We talk about other people in similar situations and how they are doing. I suppose what we are doing is know we've got to talk about this and come to plan, but we don't really want to face up to the fact that this is us.

CONVERGENTS openly make resolutions about their plans for survivorship.

I say to him, "You'll probably find a beautiful young woman to marry"; he'll say, "NO WAY." And he'll say, "But you will remarry"; and I say, "NO WAY, because whatever I have left after you die, I'm going to spend on myself. I have no intentions of ever getting married again."

We tease: "If you go first, I'm not dealing with this mess. I'm just going to get a dumpster."

The VAGUES raise the topic of dying or surviving in such a way that the conversation applies equally or ambiguously to both.

We've talked about that every now and then. We sort of say of course it would be lonely and there would be an adjustment to it. But she said it would be foolish not to face the realities of life, say that's the way it is, and get on with it.

Finally, the obvious presence of teasing and joking between the CONVERGENTS offers a sharp contrast to the VAGUES. The first group reports jokes of all kinds. They report their friends' jokes:

One of my dearest friends always says: "When one of us dies, I'M moving to Dusseldorf!"

They keep running jokes:

Ever once in a while when I get exasperated about his organizational lack, I will say I'm just training you for the next Mrs. -- .

I say, "You know the way to go is 92 years old with your 19 year old bride."(H)

I will tell W. "If we don't get busy and clean up the worst of all world messes in the basement and get our affairs in order, .. when I am gone you're going to be left with the biggest mess in creation."

I laughingly said to him the other day when I was cooking his supper and supper for the church .. I said, "Look at it this way, if I had to earn my living, I can cater."

It's been a long time ago. He kidded me about being married to a real He-man .. a big wrestler .. and spending all my money on him.

The VAGUES have no running jokes, tease rarely, and describe themselves this way.

Joke? No not really. Do you find some people do that?

I don't think we have any jokes between us on any subject. That doesn't come natural to either of us.

Overall, the VAGUES couples raise the general topic of dying or surviving in such a way that the conversation stays abstract or lacks agency. They add no levity to the discussion, dispute the other's personal prediction, consciously avoid the topic of death and separation, describe themselves as living from day to day "like we're not going to die", declare that they do not see the need to discuss this aspect of their future, and project that the partner is uncomfortable with the topic.

Overall, CONVERGENTS directly communicate their predictions, find that the partner sanctions their sharing of feelings, openly make resolutions about their plans for survivorship, and frequently tease each other.

It appears mutually held thoughts on this matter are associated with joking as much as with frank discussion between the couple. The question under study is to what extent do couples think alike on this matter, and to what extent do they co-create their personal views. While in only four couples both partners are CLEARS, three of the four are CONVERGENTS, that is, have the same scenario. One wonders if the five couples who were all VAGUES co-create confusion.

The predictive process of couples, therefore, has several parts. The CONVERGENTS talk. The VAGUES for personal, relational, or for cultural reasons do not. One might hypothesize that the topics of who will probably die first and how the survivor might adapt emotionally have never been judged by the VAGUES to be a topic of value.



### Cultural Themes in the Predictive Process

Cultural themes are statements about the larger societal context. What emerges from a close examination of these predictive processes are a pair of justifications in the culture for a devoted wife to predict her mate will die first. At the same time, there are sanctions for a husband's predictions he will die first.

Women have a pair of cultural supports for stating the husband will die first. If they outlive the husband, they most likely will be available to tend him in his last illness, even though that might not be an altogether pleasant prospect. To die last is to adhere to their unspoken, sacrificial contract not to leave the husband lonely or in the care of strangers.

There's almost this competition here. And I can't think what is the competition, but it's like, "how dare he; I'm younger than he is. That's not like the proper order." I'm supposed to take care of him and that kind of thing.

A second rationale is that by the husband dying first, the wife affirms her maternal role with their children or grandchildren by relieving them of responsibility to "interrupt their lives" to care for an ill, dependent, or cantankerous father or grandfather. At the same time she does not have to fight another cultural pressure as this wife did in requiring her husband to learn to care for himself.

I've said to him, "if I die, you'll have to manage on your own. You'd just better be able to do these things because there's something I cannot stand is the idea of these men whose wives die and move in with their daughters to look after them. I said, "it's most unfair to the family and I would expect you to look after yourself." He went along with that.

There is a pair of cultural supports for husbands to predict they will die first. First, for a man to die first and leave his widow well

protected financially is to fulfill his role as a man. Leaving a legacy proves his worth as a provider in life and death and allows him to continue his protective role even after death. If he does not, or can not provide generously, saying he will go first, and indeed the fulfillment of that prediction is more likely to be viewed as an unchivalrous form of abandonment. Second, for a husband to die first is to corroborate actuarial statistics, to confirm the order of things, to create no surprises, to be predictable.

One needs a strong justification when one believes the other will die first. The culture dictates it is disloyal to make such a prediction, particularly if the spouse has not foretold his/her own death. It is still discouraged in this culture to discuss death, and to discuss the possible poor health or death of another person is sometimes experienced as a curse as illustrated here.

We go to the clinic here on Tuesdays (mostly to monitor his heart condition). I'd get my sugar and my blood pressure checked and he'd get mad at me and say, "there's nothing ever wrong with you." And right after that (she was diagnosed with breast cancer and had to undergo a mastectomy.) I said, "You put a curse on me".

Thinking it is too close to tempting fate.

A final cultural sanction in this group against predicting either's death is that to do so is to controvert divine providence.

I always just pray about it. I just pray that if I die that somebody will take just as good care of him as I have. That's what I always pray. .. I always say that I'm older, I'll probably go first. I say that to myself and well, who knows? Only God knows. (W)

These cultural pressures inform the personal reflections and couple conversations about their futures.

Those with clear mental images more actively anticipate their futures, but all the informants contributed to a better understanding of the preoccupations and actions of older married couples. These attitudes and rehearsal processes are the subject of the next section.

## Strategies for Survivorship

### Concerns and Worries

All participants were asked to think how their lives would be different should they be without their life partner. Some people, who seem somewhat emotionally distant though loyal and companionable, answer calmly or stoically that the sensible thing would be to grieve and then take stock of one's situation and move on. Others tear and choke up at the thought, and it is hard to pursue the topic of worries and concerns in the face of dread and such expectations of longing.

Worries and concerns are numerous, but seem to fall into two basic categories: how to deal with the daily tasks of life and how to sustain emotional equilibrium. Managing daily tasks is easier to discuss. Broadly, this is the logistics of doing for one, managing the budget and investments, housekeeping, cooking, repairing and maintaining the home, and deciding where to live. The issues of maintaining emotional stability, being alone, missing the companion who listened to the details of life for so long are far harder to fathom and address. The concerns about and strategies for daily maintenance are important and will be described briefly.

The particular emphasis here, however, will be to discover how these

28 people anticipate and plan to look after their emotional needs should they survive their husband or wife.

Concerns for the Daily Tasks of Living  
and Strategies to Address Them

Financial Planning

All but two of the men have considerable investments. All of the men take very seriously their role as provider and worry that their wives have enough to sustain them through normal life circumstances.

Financial planning is the concern most readily and most widely discussed by the men. They have, over the years, bought insurance policies, particularly when the children were young, and they have drawn and updated their wills at various stages. A few have purchased a cemetery lot. These formal transactions with a lawyer, insurance agent or cemetery owner are events, which by their nature, require a person to make predictions about the future. These formal meetings are initiated out of ideas of premature and sudden death, visions of money spent in wild fits of senility, prospects of long-term illness, and specters of second mates reaping the benefits of investments cultivated over the years.

Husbands often take care of these matters. In this sample, one or two couples approach these matters together, but, on a contractual basis, men have undoubtedly more often and more regularly planned on certain future probabilities.

Men in this middle and upper middle class sample, ages 57 to 79, look to the overall financial security for the couple. Women

occasionally acquaint themselves with the inventory of investments, but in no case does the wife understand fully the financial picture or the thinking behind it. In all cases, the wives relinquish the planning to their husbands. If their husbands in the end have not planned well enough, they resolve to live on a limited income. They do not confront their financial futures directly.

The wives have some anxiety they will not manage their assets well on their own. They ask for information about holdings, the documents that verify the holdings, and for names of one or two people, lawyers, investment brokers, or insurance agents that their husbands trust, to consult if the husband should die. The prevailing attitude is resistance to the task. For some women to be expected to learn the full extent of the financial picture would be overwhelming. For others there is no interest and no motivation to learn.

..I will need some kind of help. If not understanding, perhaps simplifying. Because H. enjoys it. For me it's just something you have to do. I don't have the same interest in financial manipulation. I have pretty much a simple-minded approach to it. ... It's so complicated. I say, "don't die; .. don't die".  
(W)

I haven't the foggiest about investments and stuff like that; I'm not going to mess with that. If my son won't take it on, I know I can't. To me it's like climbing Everest. I think it's an admirable idea. .. There are things that I can't do. .. I've got a notebook with all the accounts .. and a consistent update. I'll hire someone to do it. .. If I can't hire somebody to do it for a reasonable price, I will consolidate it into one account that I can handle. It won't continue like he's got it.  
(W)

Through the years, more at his [initiation] than mine, .. I know what we have and how it's invested. I'll say, "H. you don't really learn something of this type just with being told". ..I don't worry a whole lot. ..I figure a good broker, a good banker, a good lawyer, one can find such.

The women in this sample know what they own, but they in no way are prepared to make judgments about how to transact it, where, and when. They are prepared to trust others to assure their standard of living. One interpretation of this behavior on the part of women is that by not training themselves for this responsibility, they are perpetuating their wish and belief that their husband will never leave them.

The men sense the wives' reluctance in this area. One husband until recently had planned to put the couple's money in a trust such that the wife could only have access to the interest and not the principal. Most are helping their wives locate professional advisers whom they hope will live past them. Some worry but are resigned that there is no way to buffer the wife should she need nursing care for an extended period of time.

### Housekeeping

There is the occasional husband who in the face of losing his wife will learn to prepare his food.

I would learn to cook. That would be project number one.

Others say they envision no problem getting the house in order and keeping it up. Two husbands already are acquainted with housekeeping tasks because their wives have physical limitations. Two husbands since retirement have taken on more and more tasks at home, so they do not have any apprehensions in this area.

Housekeeping functions are viewed by half the men in a way parallel to women's views of finances. They are disinterested and at this stage of life want to do other things. Those with money visualize purchasing

the services of others. Those with fewer financial resources envision learning to live with this "pain in the neck".

Although some of the men are doing more in the way of housework since retirement or since their wife became incapacitated, the wife performs the executive function, that is, makes the decisions about what needs to be done and when.

Only one of the 14 men is in any way actively preparing himself to run the home on his own. He is doing this at the insistence of his wife who appears to be protecting her daughters from feeling bound to take in a helpless father.

It is a concern of a number of wives that their husbands will live in a mess, as "undignified old men". Some women hope to avoid this by encouraging that both of them be well situated in a retirement facility where housekeeping and cooking are part of the package. Others who believe their husbands need an organizer and companion encourage them to remarry.

#### Repairing and Maintaining the Home

Generally speaking, women did not worry about how they would get the light bulbs changed or how they would get the screen door repaired. Many of these women saw themselves in environments where these tasks would be the concern of someone else whom they would pay. The men see retirement communities as their way out of these time consuming and laborious responsibilities.

## Physical Security

None of the men raised a concern for their own physical security. Women did so often only after the interviewer specifically asked them if they anticipate being apprehensive about being alone. Attitudes ranged from obliviousness to palpable apprehension.

I'm not in the habit of being concerned. (Husband traveled away from home for a month recently). I should probably be more careful than I am. .. I'm not a cautious person when it comes to things like that. (W)

Yes, I feel uneasy at night. I don't want to go to bed and far from getting sleepy around ten o'clock as I usually do, I get more wakeful at that hour when he's away. Yes, I feel distinctly uneasy about being alone at night. (W)

In one instance the husband anticipates his wife's dread and has suggested she look for a male boarder. One woman acknowledged that although she would trade off privacy and room should she move to a retirement community, she would gain a sense of protection there. It appears that some women are not threatened physically when alone. Others are just minimally aware of the security they derive from the physical presence of a man close-by. Others have a clear sense of physical protection they derive from their husband's presence. The main strategy for those who do not anticipate being in a retirement facility is to tough it out, have someone stay with them at first, or get a dog.

## Transportation

Women mention the possibility of not being able to drive. Two of the women have already taken over the chore of driving for their husbands, but being unable to drive does not come up in any conversations with the husbands. Several wives mention needing to find living quarters



near public transportation or finding an occasional driver, a paid person or a member of the extended family.

### Personal Habits

Men and women both worry about men's personal habits. One woman worries about her husband's lack of order, another worried about her husband's tendency to wear mismatched or spotted clothes. One of the men, a retired lawyer, anticipates becoming an "alley person" should his wife not be around to manage his life.

I would live a sloppy careless life. I could get pretty seedy you know .. a wacko that people would turn around and look at.

The men offer no strategies on their own behalf. Some wives plan to let their daughters inherit the responsibility to monitor their fathers. Some women are trying to organize their husbands in anticipation of a time when they will be on their own.

These logistical routines of life pose problems. Solutions for the woman depend largely upon her ability to hire others to perform them, the extent to which she has taken on these tasks already in the marriage, and the extent to which she has family close by. Men and women differ significantly in their approach in that men, more readily than women, propose finding another mate as a strategy to deal with household routines. In no case do women anticipate another husband stepping in to protect them from having to make changes.

The differing ways that men and women conceive of remarriage is explored in a later section. First, it would be useful to look at how men and women anticipate loss and their emotional needs.

### Emotional Needs and Strategies to Address Them

The participants name various concerns about maintaining emotional equilibrium. Consistently high on the list of concerns was loneliness, aloneness, losing the customary companionship.

### Men and Women Describe Loss Differently

Six of the men describe the loss in emotional terms. They use such terms as "hard loss", "intense feelings of loss", "nothing could replace the emotional relationship", "traumatic", "hell". Four of the men do not characterize the loss for them in an emotional way. They deny they would feel lonely, the loss would not be a major problem, they claim to have no real feeling on it. A few of the men likened the loss to another experience. One likened the experience and his emotional approach to the loss to his recently having to give up an old car that was a happy car and serviceable. One stated the "nuts and bolts of day to day living would change." Another ranked losing his spouse on a "scale" right next to the trauma he had felt being demoted from his job of 25 years. Another described the loss as being like "opening a new door." What is curious about the characterizations of the men is that they are more diffuse and in no way uniform when matched against those of the women.

The women talked more explicitly of the long grief they would expect, the numbness, the abjectness, and in four instances, their preference to either die before their husband to avoid the pain or to die at the same time. They describe the loss as "devastating", "painful", "I would be on my own", "I would be overcome with grief", "my heart would be broken". Three are more reserved, describing life without the spouse as being "different" or requiring she "reschedule".

As if they have always anticipated the idea of living past their husband, they articulate a kind of resignation about living past their husbands. Along with the pain of being left, however, was in some cases indications of the relief at being unhindered by the husbands needs.

I'm sure that it is going to be different. .. there won't be a lot of the things that we do together and I won't have to pick up after him. What a relief. As H. once said, "If you don't have to pick up after me, what would you do with your time?" (laughter) I probably would find I could pick up after myself... There are a lot of things I like to do.

How would I function. Some of it is fear. And some of it is delight! To be alone. Fortunately we can joke about this. I mean when he goes away I love it. He's intense and emotional; I mean that's why I value him so much. At the same time, sometimes it's a little much. ... Plus, he just accumulates the messes and it sometimes gets to me. So I fantasize being free from that. And I fantasize the loneliness. So it's mixed. I wouldn't say that one is more predominant. It's just a recognition of it.

The other remarkable theme in the women's statements is that not one initiates the idea of remarriage as a way to deal with their loss, where in the men's statements, there is frequent mention of replacing and substituting. This is the subject of the next section.

### Remarriage as a Strategy

#### Husbands.

The husbands in the study view remarriage generally as an acceptable and even inviting option for them should they lose their present wife. They often initiate the topic of remarriage in the course of the interview as they recount discussions they have had with their spouse relative to death and survivorship. Some discuss with the wife the value they place on "not putting strings on each other".

In response to the question of whether they might consider remarriage, 11 of the husbands reply optimistically in the affirmative.

It would be fine for either of us. I would, certainly.

I think you could work things out.

It would be a happier life than being single.

The analysis showed the purpose of remarriage for these men.

Companionship, "the possibility of a happy relationship" is the rationale given most often.

A man in his 50s says:

I need someone to show me the other side of the mountain. ..  
Once your spouse dies, there's just no reason to spend the rest  
of your life [alone].

I: The talks you've had, how would you describe the tone or the atmosphere of such talks?

H: I think they are realistic. I don't think they are morbid. I think that in a sense they are a celebration of life and living together. The idea that we have had this time together and that we would like to see the other's move into a different relationship is as easy and as joyful and as free from stress as we can. We try to enable one another to have that feeling.

The companionship of marriage was seen by one man as serving a purpose beyond the satisfaction of two partners.

These are things I feel are important about a good marriage. To the extent that you have good communication and are nurturing and caring and helping one another grow, you become effective in your ministry and service in whatever form that takes in the wider world, either in your city or on a broader spectrum. .. You're going to do a better job if you work on the marriage.

Other needs would prospectively be addressed by remarriage. Three men mentioned their sexual needs and longings. Should these desires be relatively the same as at present, this would fuel their plan to find a marriage partner. One man, in his 70's, said he would anticipate having

his sexual needs met, but not necessarily within marriage. He hastened to say he would like to remarry, but for more reasons than the availability of a sexual partner.

It occurs to men that along with companionship comes daily attention to the household, their needs and well-being. One man said he would move to a smaller home which would not necessitate housework "unless I had a companion." Some men said they would pay for housekeeping and restaurant services if they were alone. One man sees his wife as the buffer between him as a dignified retired attorney and a bum.

I would just flop around, get more untidy. And unless I remarry, I could get pretty seedy.

Somehow a wife holds back this husband's tendency to let go his grip on normal routines. One man believes a wife can also forestall death by enabling a husband to have a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

They need companionship. And if they are left on their own .. It's just like somebody who retires and .. has not planned for it. [That person] is not going to live long. I mean they sit in the rocking chair and within a year they're dead. And I think this is probably the same situation with couples.

Each man has a personal approach to this subject. Talking about it for some is fraught with a sense of disloyalty. Even so 11 of the 14 readily state that remarriage would be a definite option for them. That is 78% of this small sample. These personal and one-of-a-kind statements are included as indications of the variety of strategies that will lead these men toward remarriage.

The men also have reservations. One man who is firm about not wanting to remarry wonders whether his needs could be so strong as to justify the time and effort to adjust to another mate.

I don't visualize a need that would justify the effort. The present relationship I have with my wife is not replaceable.

Fears that the children or previous friends may disapprove give one man considerable hesitations. Two of the men worry that the financial commitment to another relationship would require they struggle with dual loyalties. Neither want to leave their children and grandchildren with less than they imagine leaving them at this point. Both cite pre-nuptial contracts as a way of protecting themselves from such emotional and financial jeopardy. One man sees it this way.

H: The worst case scenario would be that I marry this person who doesn't really have any resources and my conscious thought in marrying that person is, well the estate I have I want to go to my son and wife and their issues. And if I precede you, the new wife, in death, not providing for you. Well, that's the worst case scenario.

I: Okay, abandoning the second wife financially, in essence.

H: Right. .. I mean I've heard of prenuptial contracts and agreements and this kind of thing. In one way it's pretty crass to say, "Let's get married, but I've got a contract I want you to sign."

The same man is wary of entering another contract where he might be liable for the day to day care of an ill person.

In summary, three husbands, one in his 70s and two in their 60s rule out the idea of marriage for themselves. Eleven men give responses that range from "I would have no reservations" to answering "yes" but with some hesitations. The eleven see life as a married person as the most desirable state. Of all the gauged responses in this study, the contrast between men and women on this point was the most emphatic.

The husbands are equally encouraging of their partners to consider remarriage, though some do not sense their wives are interested in such a

prospect. None of the husbands seem to want their wives to feel bound to the marriage after his death. Only one husband said it would go against the cultural norms of their background for his wife to remarry in old age. One husband realizes that if his wife remarries she, in effect, gives up about 75% of her income. His retirement, unlike some other men's benefits, continues to come to her after his death, but only up until the point she should remarry.

### Wives.

Only one of the women said outright she would like to remarry. Remarriage is a strategy fraught with conflict and serious trade-offs for these women. It should be noted again that this sample is largely financially secure, and it happens to be one of those less secure who mentioned remarriage as a positive option for her.

The wives sound very different from their husbands as they consider the idea of entering another marriage. They do not see remarriage as a way to cope with their loss. They address the topic with some displeasure. Typically, I initiated the topic with the women where the men usually initiated the topic on their own.

The women's responses are marked by hesitance and a disinclination toward another marriage.

I doubt very much I would remarry.

I wouldn't be adverse if it were the right person. It's certainly not something I would search for.

No way. Once is enough.

I wouldn't have another one.

I don't think so. I'm quite emphatic about that.

Three women seem uninterested because they feel their marriages were quite special, their needs have been met, and they believe it unlikely that a future marriage could hold for them such happiness.

Most of the women are quite positive about their marriages. As mentioned earlier two prefer to pre-decease their husbands. While their comment on remarriage is to some extent a comment on their present relationship, it is clear that the ongoing relationship, seen as a compatible one, is viewed in its whole context, of 30 to 45 years as parents, as keepers of each other's memories and frailties. Their apparent view of a future mate is someone probably retired, not a co-parent, not needed as a provider, and someone who is liable to fall ill. They do not see such an arrangement as enticing. The balance sheet of pros and cons is definitely in favor of going it alone. Although the wives encourage their husbands to remarry, they do not in this case feel what's good for the gander is good for the goose.

Like the men, the women's statements run in different directions. There is one theme supported by statements from ten of the women, the theme that marrying again would most likely hinder them or deny them personal freedom. These women do not feel "unfree" as one wife put it. But the words "sacrifice", "adjust", and "look after" appear regularly in their comments.

These ten women look forward to planning their own time. They look forward to having their own space, cleaned and kept to their standards. They look forward to spending money without having to confer on decisions. They look forward to not having to adjust and sacrifice.



Well, I think [sexual matters] could be a problem, but I think there's more than that. I think that you have certain little things that you do or ways you respond; I just think it would be hard to adjust .. without there being some friction. .. For instance, if you had someone who didn't pick up their things and just left things around, this would drive me crazy.

So not just the adjustments, but the friction that would go along with the adjustments are of concern. Another woman echoed this.

.. over periods of time you learn what you can get done, how to handle each other so you get what you want without creating a stir or a conflict, confrontation. ..It's been nice but I'd like to try it without being married. .. The freedom to do what you want, when you want. Not having to consider somebody else's needs. Though I don't resent his needs, but it would be nice. There are an awful lot of people that I would not want to be married to.

One woman is relieved at the idea of not having to negotiate a sexual relationship with another man.

That would be a very trying situation to me of trying to make my life over to adjust to someone else's sexual life.

Another woman readily expresses her desire to have lovers and deep friendships with men, but is unwilling to sacrifice her personal space and independence by marrying.

My fantasy is having lovers; I mean what woman doesn't have that? .. When I say I wouldn't have another one, I'm more serious than joking. Because of the adjustment. All the complications. I could see myself just developing a relationship with a man, which would mean deep friendship, but not necessarily a marriage.

One woman, who says she fears the idea of having to live on past her husband, captures the direction of many of the wives' comments.

I think [a later life marriage] is probably easier for men; or they don't see it in quite the same way. A man, an older man, gets married for different reasons, possibly. He will, you know, have a woman looking after him. But I would be the one who would be doing the looking after, the housekeeping and so forth, and I'm not sure I want to. .. If I'm not married, I think I might be just as happy on my own.

This comes from a woman is one who prefers to die first rather than to be "forced to live on without him." This is typical of the wives. Devotion to the present husband seems to in no way predispose these women toward remarriage as an ideal state.

### Shared Living

Most people acknowledge that a death will require a move. The lifestyle that two have presently is held together via the delicate balance of sharing tasks and keeping the present level of health. Many cite the physical drain of yard work, cooking, maintaining the house. Although a pervasive strategy for survivorship is to stay put and make no decisions in haste, all at least entertain the idea of smaller quarters or retirement facilities.

The idea of communal living, that is, teaming up with another person to share the tasks of life is not a possibility for any of the American couples, but for both husband and wife in the Irish couple, living with a sister or with others in shared quarters seemed like the most probable option. Given the strong sense of family in Ireland, this is not surprising. Several of the American wives have considered living with their sisters. In two cases, the sisters have actually spent time together and explicitly stated a part of the agenda being whether they could live together in the future. None of these wives presently feel it is their first choice or even much of a possibility. There is a welcomed feeling of comfort when a wife recounts a daughter extending her household to her mother. None of the mothers want the need to arise, but

they take obvious comfort in the fact they have a daughter so inclined to open her heart and home to her mother.

### Other Relationships

The participants look to their children, generations of grandchildren, old friends, brothers and sisters, and prospective comrades in service missions for company. Women worry that their husbands will not be outgoing enough to develop relationships outside the family, and some men know their tendency is to think about it and never do it.

None of the people aspire to live with their children, but invitations to do so and assurances of welcome are very comforting to at least two of the women. Two men are concerned about giving up a living arrangement that permits them to entertain their children. Most hope to be within traveling distance of at least one child.

Women refer with some regularity to teaming up with their sisters. Three of the women have at one point or another imagined living with a sister should her husband die. One woman clearly views her siblings and those of her husband as her main supports; there appears to be distance between her and her one child. Two people, who are only children, seem ready to rely on former strategies used to manage without playmates as a child.

One participant described his grandchildren as potential threats to well-being. He worries that his grandsons will take advantage of his wife financially even to the point of attempting to take her power of attorney and hasten her out of her house and into a nursing facility. He

has helped many older people, and has seen children impatient for their parents' property.

### Work and Service

Most people need to feel useful, to keep a sense of emotional equilibrium, and this sample has a variety of interests and talents which they propose to use or continue using. One woman is retraining in order to have a marketable or professional level skill. Some men and women consider going more deeply into their current volunteer or church commitments. Some imagine learning skills and subject matters like archaeology, music, or languages. One man recalls the strategy of a distant cousin who had similar handyman skills to his own. This man lived with widows (apparently without striking up sexual relationships) for weeks at a time fixing, maintaining and pruning their homes and yards.

Some question whether they will be able to keep focused enough to continue interests like painting and building. Others have solitary work and play they enjoy and hope to continue enjoying these activities.

At least one woman has tested out her fantasy of finally getting around to long hikes and outings alone. When she attempted these things during one of her husband's routine absences, she discovered how much she missed having someone at home to tell her good-by. She realized her physical stamina and courage were not sufficient to get her through such schemes. It appears she had not sufficiently taken account of the confidence and emotional stability she draws from having someone to welcome her home.

The first time he went away I thought, "Gee, FREEDOM!" And then, little by little I wondered why I'm not getting all these things done I was going to do. And I thought, "lady, you're depressed. I would wander around .. but I.. just didn't do all these things that you'd think. .. Like "well, if I don't have to make meals I can do this" -- or whatever. I wasn't doing them and it finally hit me that I was just sort of aimlessly acting like a cat we had when the other cat died. She just roamed around like "what do I do now?"

### Anticipatory Socialization

The process of learning adaptive attitudes for an anticipated role is known as "anticipatory socialization." There is clear evidence that both men and women learn strategies ahead of time that prepare them for the situation that will confront them as a bereaved person. Close examination of the vicarious learnings reported by these participants underscores the very different situations men and women envision for themselves.

It is clear from the kinds of statements women make that they envision themselves needing to cope with loneliness. Men's observations are almost without exception ones which anticipate the possibility and probability of a future wife.

Men do not observe men alone. They observe men making new connections with women. They notice their fathers, men at church, family members who are revitalized and happy in second marriages or close companionships.

A man in his early 70s made this observation:

I would think [remarriage] would be the right thing to do. As an example, [Otis] and [Elizabeth], that is a nice arrangement I think. They're companions. Sometimes they're at her house, sometimes at his. I'm sure both of their lives are fuller from it. And under those conditions, I would certainly. It doesn't mean that you think anything less of your wife that died.

Of the six men who volunteer such observations or vicarious learnings, five are focused on the prospective relationship. Only one learns from someone else how to proceed alone. He learns from his widowed mother as he recalls her difficulties learning to cook economically and with pleasure for one. He alone is learning from someone ahead of him how to manage alone, and ironically, he is learning that from a woman. Men do not talk to other men about what the future may have in store.

Women, more often than men, report how others before them handled situations. They note others' behavior as a model or as a warning. Women have talked with their mothers, aunts, sisters and friends about the experience of widowhood, grief, and loneliness. They observe widows at church, widowed neighbors and co-workers and how they adapt.

Women observe how others handle their aloneness. They report conversations with their friends or with widowed relatives about their resolve not to remarry. They seem to be confirming their judgment that remarriage is not the best course for them.

A woman in her 50s ended her considerations of remarriage noting her aunt and all her aunt's friends would echo her opinion.

It's been nice, but I'd like to try it without being married. .. The freedom to do what you want .. not having to consider someone else's needs. Though I don't resent his needs, it would be nice. There are an awful lot of people that I would not want to be married to. .. So it just wouldn't be worth the effort. .. This aunt I told you about, my favorite one. She's been a widow for a number of years and she has quite a few widowed friends. Most of them would not want [to be married]. They've talked about it -- no way.

Women learn from their associations how to cope with being alone. One woman learns from a neighbor, who most of the time gets on quite well alone, how devastating the evening hours are "after everyone has gone in with their companions and she is left alone in the house by herself."

She goes on to say,

We sat and talked about that and she said she would wake sometimes in the middle of the night and be very lonely. .. I think the hardest thing for me would be the loneliness part of it, and I never to that point thought about nighttime until she brought it up.

Women learn by the behavior of others how to off set the loneliness to which they resign themselves. One saw a friend turn down a marriage proposal. She observed in her friend's decision the resolution "only trade freedom for love."

Another woman observes that during her mother's time of grief, she found her strengths as a quilter and as a writer. She made a dozen quilt tops in one winter, a pastime her husband had denied her. Her feelings of intense loss, however, did not seem to this daughter to diminish. This woman hopes to continue to cultivate her new-found talent as a painter, but assumes she, like her mother, will be lonely and "kind of lost".

Another who believes she was simply "programmed" to the belief, "once a widow, always a widow," observes the close friendships of widows and assumes she will have to "work at being closer with others of all ages."

Two women in their 70s take comfort and courage from the observation that their sisters manage the "empty bed" and a life alone, and resolve, "if she can do it, I can do it." Another woman in her 60s tries

everything she can think of to find out what the loss of her life companion will feel like. She actively looks for a reason to have hope and a feeling of reassurance that there can be a satisfying life for her without her husband of 40 years. She admits she cannot imagine committing suicide from despondency, but she is one who wishes to die first, to be spared the pain. She will clearly feel more confident in her own abilities if she can find a woman as devoted as she is to her husband who has weathered widowhood.

#### Philosophical and Religious Foundations

Many people have views of life which are adequate for the situations they approach day to day. Fewer people have an overall philosophy of life or a set of religious convictions broad enough to encompass such a large event as death or profound loneliness. A number of people in the study cite philosophical positions and religious convictions as personal resources they believe will help them should their life partner die. Overall, the ready recourse to religious or spiritual perspectives in trying times was not overly present.

For three men and three women Christian faith is a sustaining and strengthening presence in their lives. These people take comfort and direction from their belief in a supreme being, who is receptive to a prayerful relationship and who gives purpose to disturbing events. This group made comments such as the following:

I say that's when you need faith to give you strength. You can pray for direction, even before, sometimes. I do feel that faith, as I know it, is very satisfying.(W)

I do think that there is something after this life as we know it. .. And I don't like the idea .. that this is all there is. To me, I would be a real panic. I don't know how I would react



cause, maybe it's primitive the fact that if people, if you were just here for the span of time and that nothing else mattered, I wonder how I would live my life. I mean, would I act differently? All this is tied into a belief of some kind of common life afterwards.(W)

My heart would be broken; we've been together too many years. But I would have to be strong because I have a daughter, which I hope I will continue having. .. So I hope and pray to God that he would give me strength to get along because of my family. .. So you just pray about everything, that's the best you can do.(W)

One's religious values .. make you more accepting of things, the way they are, and that, you know, somebody besides yourself put this all together and you're living out something that is not your script but somebody else's script, to a degree. And you make the best of things. That you continue to try and lead a constructive kind of life however it happens to work itself out. Who goes first isn't something that you have any control over, and so you have to have some way to find that that's natural and to accept it and to go on and try to be positive about the whole thing. And I think religion gives you a rationale for doing that.(H)

Although most of the participants are active in a church or religious community, some mention their associations and friends in the communities, not a specific set of beliefs as sustaining to them in a time of loss.

The Buddhist couple both mention the help their discipline of over 30 years would afford. The wife has this to say:

I would say this teaching that has so influenced my life would be the main [resource]. Learning not to hang onto things. A way of life that you like doesn't mean you like it any less because you would be able to let go of it. And I don't think it means that you love a person any less that you would be able to let go of them. I'm sure that's not the case, though I think a lot of people might look at it like that.

Her husband echoes this theme of being able and trained through practice to "let go".

One of the basic teachings of Buddhism is impermanence and that's kind of underlying everything that the whole Buddhist

structure of practice and philosophy is built on. Part of the practice of Buddhism is to be aware of this impermanence all the time, not to the point of being morose or anything. I've found, for example, that it's easy to give up things. Not give up, to let go of things as a result of Buddhist practice. In fact, letting go is what the practice is all about. So I think from that standpoint, it would be very helpful.

Others have developed philosophical attitudes toward loss. One husband, a physician in his 50s, explains his sustaining ideas relative to loss with an analogy, the recent loss of a favorite old car.

I: If you experienced the loss of your wife, what do you see as the way you would kind of get through that? What would help you get through that loss?

H: I will give you a real crude example, but it makes the point. Just recently, my old car was setting out here where yours is setting. We were eating supper when it went down the hill and ran into a tree. It bent the whole back up. Just an old Subaru, 14 years old. .. It wasn't worth it to fix it, so I got rid of it. I gave it away to a person who could use the engine; good parts. That was a happy car. I got it because it looked good to me. It was an old red car, but it was a nice car. I enjoyed it, had a good time with it, and I rejoiced in the car in a sense. (If you can understand this analogy.) Although it was hard to give up, I recognized that I had good use from it; that I had enjoyed it. I also recognized the finite nature of it and rejoiced in the fact that I had the opportunity to have this car. It is gone. In a sense, it has to be the same with the relationship with people. I do with patients, and I am sure I have to do with my wife. I would have to rejoice as I do each day with the opportunity that has been mine to share my life with her and her with me. Although the gas mileage may not have been as good sometimes as others, the relationship may not have always been on four cylinders, it has been more on four cylinders than not. So I would not have to live with regrets as we commented earlier, or sorrows, or sadness of a guilt nature. The grief would not have to be necessarily, "woe is me, I have suffered this great loss", but would be more of a rejoicing for the opportunity that has been mine to deal with it. If I can, and I think I can, live with that idea in mind, then I can get through the sadness of having to do away with that relationship.

Two men in their 70s believe that their flexible, adaptable nature and the strong value they attach to these characteristics will enable

them to manage. Just as being "dependent" is associated in their minds with probable failure to adjust, being "flexible" and "adaptable" is viewed as the key to weathering loss.

You know, strangely enough, I have a lot more apprehension about what will happen to my wife if I die first than about myself. I really don't have apprehensions about myself. I am an extremely flexible and adaptable person. I've always been able to adapt to any kind of situation. I have no real apprehensions about this. As to really what I would do, I haven't given it any great thought, because I will just do what comes naturally. That's the way I feel about myself.

The other elderly husband stated:

[I read an author who said] we are basically a new person every day. Not only physically because our body tends to change, but we are continually changing and so we are basically in the process of becoming a new person. I like that concept. .. All I have to do is walk out my back yard in the spring and I see evolution taking place every day, and so that's reality. If we're not progressing, we're regressing, and so I guess that I have to believe that we have to be flexible. I don't mean not have beliefs or not have any guides, but we have to bend with the changes in life or else we'll break. I think that's one of the hardest things for aging people to do, is to change and be flexible.

Women more than men anticipate leaning toward institutionalized religious beliefs as comforts and guides during times of loss and sadness. Men, although affiliated with churches as often as women, tend toward reliance on personal philosophies not contingent on a belief in a supreme being.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the major conclusions are reviewed. Ways in which the findings speak to the theoretical frameworks and concepts which stimulated the work are addressed. The limitations of the study are noted along with possible extensions and suggestions for future studies. Finally, applications to practice are explored.

### Major Conclusions

Half of the people interviewed predict their futures and some take definite steps based on their predictions. The reflective temperament, a person's historical sense, dialogue with the mate, and societal roles and sanctions all play a part in the predictive process.

A small number of couples discuss their personal predictions relative to their own or the other's death. Those who do agree the topic has some value and share an ability to share thoughts in a direct way and in joking ways.

Whether prospective ideas on how one will adjust to a time in life without the life partner will indeed serve as anchors and aids should widow or widowerhood occur is unknown. But what is clear from this study is that some people do consider ahead of time how they might cope. It would be interesting to test on a larger scale to determine what part of the married population they are.

Although some people do not see a value in the planning process, others believe active anticipation of an undesired outcome is a reassuring and sensible thing to do. Men and women have different concerns and visions of what lies ahead for them. They approach their

futures in very different ways in this later stage of life. Husbands plan either for death or remarriage and a continuance of many things. Women plan for solitariness and most do not envision further intimacy with men. The thoughts and actions of these women and men may resonate to those wanting to prepare for one of life's last claims. In the most general of terms, this study suggests that discussions with men and women about their futures as widows or widowers would be a fascinating way to tap the cultural differences between men and women in our culture and others.

Symbolic Interactionist Theory largely Corroborated  
and occasionally Questioned

The interviews which were the basis of this study sometimes corroborate and other times question symbolic interactionist theory and the theories of Berger and Kellner.

Individuals Construct a Personal Reality

The symbolic interactionist theory holds that people "place importance on their ability to anticipate the future" (page 2 of this study). In this study about a third of the participants could be so described. Certainly none of the participants want to hasten this aspect of their future, so it may be that people anticipate their future in direct relationship to the satisfaction they expect to derive from it or to the level of fear they have about it.

Symbolic interactionist theory further holds that people "actively create their reality by means of their interpretations of circumstances and meanings they attach to situations." This tenet supposes a process of active reflection. This process of selective interpretation fits the

process I observed of people selecting and weighing different circumstances as they render judgments about their personal futures. At the same time, the 14 VAGUES attest to the fact that fully half of the people interviewed have reflected very little on this aspect of their reality and in fact are not "active" in creating their reality. It may be hypothesized that a behavior of some of the VAGUES is they prefer to avoid discussion about their own mortality.

An examination of the factors that influence peoples' predictions fits firmly with Mead's ideas summarized in Chappell and Orbach (1986) that the construction of reality is a process borne out of personal perception, conversations in the marriage, and the wider social context. Where I would differ, is again with their characterization of this as an "active" or intentional process. Relatively few of these participants admit intentionality in their thought process. Again, a quantitative measure could indicate how deliberate or intentional the process of reality construction is when dire circumstances or anticipated death is the issue.

The IN PROCESS group, however, are of special interest relative to the symbolic interactionist's theoretical position in that they demonstrate the process of actively building one's reality. These two people show that new perceptions may promote revised predictions.

It is interesting that eight of the 14 CLEAR and IN PROCESS participants mention in the course of their interviews having had a counseling or marital enrichment relationship at one time, or having trained as a volunteer counselor. One may hypothesize that counseling processes, that is, discussions which focus on feelings, goals, behavior

and individual intentions heighten a person's sense of their personal control.

Certainly some of the participants wrestle to assimilate "novelty" or unexpected events in their lives, but there is also a sense that consistency is reassuring. Some people prize harmony and consistency. Others prize adaptability, flexibility and change. The people with toss-up scenarios and those who are IN PROCESS "think through possible futures", but there is some evidence that "novelty" is simply ignored by many people.

Like Kuyps (1983), Heyman and Jeffers (1965) and James (1964) this study showed an overall disinclination to actively plan for the future. There are people who philosophically cultivate a present oriented state of being. Two of the participants in this study would fall into that category. For many others, there is an intentional decision not to focus on these matters. The degree of intentionality and proactivity may fluctuate in inverse proportion to the desirability of a particular scenario. It is possible theorists have assumed that there is no shift in cognitive engagement depending on the intensity of the setting.

#### Individuals Construct a Stabilizing Reality within Marriage

For the most part, one could categorize the planning styles of each participant in Kuly's (1983) descriptive camps: Secure, Concerned, Overwhelmed, Fatalistic. These categories, however, do not allow for people I would call Evasive or Vague. Returning to Berger and Kellner, one might hypothesize the topic had not been named as a legitimate or relevant one within the "marital conversation".

The CLEARS in this study show evidence of having talked and joked about the topic with their spouse. The VAGUES had not. One conclusion that could be drawn is that a spouse is more confident of a viewpoint in the presence of a stranger when one has discussed the issue with the spouse and has had the thought roughly affirmed by the spouse. This explanation, if deemed tenable, lends credibility to Berger and Kellner's (1964) view that it may eventually evolve that no experience is fully real unless and until it has been jointly discussed. Over time, the marital conversation may fill in the gaps of the individual's pre-marriage sense of reality, and afford through the dialectic a clearer and more coherent sense of reality. One might hypothesize that predictive confidence is strengthened hearing spouse's predictions of life expectancy or which of the couple will die first.

#### Individual Realities are Influenced by the Wider Culture

Our culture gives little support for conversations about death and the pain of finality. There is evidence of superstition associated with talk of another's death, and there is little cultural support for a husband and wife as intimates to be receptive to each other's fears about or plans for life after the mate's death. Societies with one dominant religion have far less trouble publically and communally expressing "answers" to death. It is perhaps too wide a consideration, but it would be interesting to discover what losses we incur in a culture of many faiths.



## Conceptual Literature on Grief

I was interested in whether Lindemann's notion of "anticipatory grief" went on, on some level, with elderly married people living in the same household. His concept came out of observations of a newly married woman separated from her husband by war. There is no evidence that wives purposefully grieve or distance themselves, self-protectively from their aging husbands. What seems to occur is intimations of what the separation will be like when they find themselves alone for a day or a week during the husband's absence. To a lesser extent, men take note of such hints.

It is hard to evaluate whether Janis'(1958, 1971) concept of the "work of worrying" was in evidence. The concept is posited on the presence of fear as the motivator to rehearsal. Certainly some of the women "fear" the loss of their spouses, but they are often the ones who shy away from such discussion. It appears there is a delicate balance between when fear can motivate and when denial interrupts intellectual problem-solving. One woman who characterizes herself as fearful takes it upon herself in an intentional way to allay her fears by searching for women previously in similarly satisfying marriages who have successfully surfaced from grief.

Neugarten (1968) says men rehearse for illness while women rehearse for widowhood. Men, more often than women, raise the issue of a last illness and how they would deal with it. Men tend to initiate talk about Living Wills, stipulate how they wish to be treated, and concern themselves more with how the marital relationship would change should one of the partners become incapacitated.

Remondet et al. (1987) who looked at widows up to 42 years into their widowhood found that those who recalled actions taken before the death have higher adjustment scores. The present study concerned as much with men as with women, verifies that both men and women take actions. It seems logical that the clear thinking person who goes through the processes theorized by the symbolic interactionists stands a better chance of adjusting to loss and its changes than the person who does not rehearse.

Eissler's (1955) sense that middle-aged people begin to develop the notion of "time left to live" is borne out in the present study. Like Eissler, I observed not only do people note that they have less time to live than they have already lived, they sometimes make predictions about their life expectancy.

It is well known that a higher percentage widowed men remarry than widowed women (Cleveland and Gianturco, 1976). Brubaker (1985) explains this in the following way.

Differences in the male and female remarriage rates are related to the fewer numbers of available men and the tendency for men to marry younger women. Consequently, there are substantial numbers of older women who are divorced or widowed and who have few potential marriage partners (p. 23).

A broader study may indicate that this is generally the case, but the results of the present study suggest a significant sub-set of women have reservations about remarrying. Little data is available on widows' reservations about remarrying, and this in itself could be the subject of a qualitative study. It appears from the interviews that men have two strongly felt needs: to be cared for day to day and to have a close companion. It appears women, who have financial resources from their

first marriage, do not plan to satisfy their emotional needs through a second marriage. Perhaps as attitudes towards sexuality and sex-related roles change in the over 50 population, or as the post World War II babies reach seniority, there will be a shift in the attitudes on the part of women. Here again is an area of interest for further research.

#### Applications for future Quantitative and Qualitative Research

The generalizations about men and women made all through this study of 28 people may stimulate further research of wider scope. It is always hard to predict from information gathered from a small sample. Indeed the purpose of such a study is not to predict but to open new areas of study, to discover new phenomena, and to discuss a slice of life in which people can recognize themselves. In my experience with the study there are many areas of potential interest to quantitative research. Some have been raised in the last pages. Others follow here.

Enough terms, categories and relationships have been uncovered to permit some of the findings here to be quantitatively examined. Cottrell (1942), cited in Burr et al., 1979, for example, says that there is no instrument by which one can gauge anticipatory socialization. Kinds of behaviors which come under this rubric are cited, including discussions with peers, discussions with widows, and observations of happy remarriages. Linking any kind of anticipatory processes with adjustment would be an interesting topic of research.

Likewise, information derived from this study can lend refinements to the instrument Remondet et al. (1987) used to measure anecdotally

previous rehearsal behavior in widows. Such an instrument could be informed by the men's unique needs and range of rehearsal behaviors.

Quantitative studies can be conceived to document the incidence of a stable mental image about who will probably die first. Such studies could rely on or expand the noted five indicators that a clear mental image exists. One might test to determine whether the presence of a clear prediction of the future of the couple is likely to occur with people able to predict their individual life expectancy.

It is hoped that findings from this inquiry will stimulate more studies of the strategies useful in the adjustment to widowhood. Certainly keys to adjustment in some people are found in their anticipatory emotional processes. The findings also give guidance to inquiries about husbands' processes which have rarely been included in the bereavement literature.

A number of topics were raised but not explored in the course of these interviews. Some of these may be fruitful areas for qualitative inquiry. The process of rehearsing for illness within the couple now that prolonged medical care and long term illnesses like Alzheimer's effect people's sense of their probable futures. Couples may well need to plan for an additional chapter in their relationship. There was clearly anxiety about how each would take to the role of caregiver or dependent patient.

Another topic was raised late in the study, the idea of beliefs about an afterlife and whether such beliefs would influence ideas about remarriage. I asked a few of the participants whether they viewed death as a final separation from their mates.

Another curious findings was that these 13 American women for all their attractions to affiliative behavior (Gilligan, 1982) show no desire, nor even the idea of striking up a living arrangement with another woman as a strategy to deal with the responsibilities of a home nor as a strategy to deal with loneliness. Asking why certain ideas are not feasible can be an enlightening interview gambit.

Although Martin-Matthews (1987) describes widowhood as an "expectable" life event for women, it was the case in this small sample that of those participants whose parents had died, it was the case that the mother died first in half the cases. Parents acted as guides in a number of ways. They either did or did not discuss death and attendant topics, they either did or did not believe and plan that one would die first, their surviving parent either adjusted well or poorly to life without the mate and the children, now elderly have all the benefit of those vicarious learnings. This may be a topic for qualitative study to learn about the resources given to the struggling older person by his or her parents.

#### Applications for Practice

Findings in this study encourage wider discussion of the topic of survivorship in the context of retirement planning and in therapeutic and hospice settings.

In several cases at the end of the interview, participants stated that they were pleased for the occasion to reflect on these future matters and looked forward to finding out their mate's thoughts. One of the couples later told me of a camping trip they had taken with sisters and brothers. Their thoughts about the recent interview gave impetus to

a fireside discussion among all of them about their probable futures and how they might prepare.

These responses indicate there would be receptivity to these topics in growth oriented seminars and workshops for older couples. Couples could be given a shortened version of the Interview Guide as a prefatory experience to sharing with others or planning for their needs as a couple. Couples could be asked to think through their individual strategies and resources, and thereby have the experience of being helped and encouraged by the mate to make this difficult transition. Older employees are used to the idea of planning seminars for their retirement years. Perhaps this kind of subject matter could be joined with retirement planning.

In all instances, the presence of humor, when facing these topics, is an indication of good mental health and emotional resiliency. In work with couples on these topics, or on any topics which for them are taboo, it may be useful to ask diagnostic questions that look to the ease the couple has in joking. Since humor is a vehicle for approaching what is taboo (Mulkey, 1988), the counselor may use jokes to make this forbidden subject legitimate and part of the marital conversation.

In counseling widows and widowers, the therapist's questions may be informed by the distinctions these prospective survivors made. A trend in therapeutic intervention in the 90s is to help clients find, refine and use their competencies. The therapist may explore with her client the marital conversations that bore on the probable death of the spouse, the preparations each made ahead of time, the conversations about remarriage, and intuitions based on the experience of parents and others.

For some people, conforming to the wishes of the dead spouse is satisfying and it perpetuates a part of the companionship after death. For others conflicts arise when the survivor knowingly goes against the wishes of the spouse. Exploring the dialogue which existed indirectly through talk of others' situations, through jokes, or through intentional discussion can make these conflicts explicit and therefore part of the therapeutic discussion.

My observation in hospice work is that too often friends' and families' energies are directed toward the dying family member, almost to the exclusion of the healthy, caregiving spouse. The surviving partner is not only exhausted after the death, but is very often left with feelings of inadequacy and sometimes guilt along with the grief.

Bereavement programs are available, but more focus on the couple unit and ways in which they can extend themselves to one another while living should be the focus while the patient is still alive. The patient is sometimes weary of having to ask for and be the recipient of so much effort. It could be salutary for the patient to be called upon to assist the mate to explore fears about the future and plans. Not every couple would be emotionally equipped to do this, but the survivor who had done this with the mate may very well be less hindered in making some of the choices necessary to restore them to a happy and productive life.

Aside from introducing the topic more widely, it is apparent from the study that humor may be the best vehicle for its introduction. A recurring behavior with couples who have, in fact, discussed these topics is that of joking, or good-natured teasing. These couples seem close and approachable to one another.

\* \* \*

A great many things happened to me professionally and personally in the course of this research. In the initial preparation for the project and in the midst of the continual study necessary for my practice, I discovered the family researchers themselves, by what they do not study, can reflect and perhaps foster societal taboos and blind spots. There is little literature on the emotional needs of elderly couples. There is so much to see.

Regularly, in the course of the interviews, the participants introduced me to topics they felt were important but which were outside the scope of this project. Some of these topics are the anticipations of caring for a chronically ill partner, the struggles to decide ahead of time on the protocols one wishes to be observed in the event one or the other becomes terminally ill, feelings about breaking up the homeplace in favor of a retirement community, whether to be cremated or buried, and the visions each has or does not have of a life after death. These are clearly issues for older couples. Such topics may lend themselves to future inquiry.



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## APPENDIX A

SAMPLE EXPLANATORY LETTER

Name of prospective couple  
Address

Date

Dear Mr. and Mrs. --- ,

I am writing to ask for your participation in a study of long-married couples on the subject of preparing for widowhood or widowerhood. I am studying the ways individuals think about and possibly plan for a time in life when they might be without their life-partner. (Another couple's name) has been very supportive of the project and gave me your names as possible participants.

I am completing my doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy through the Department of Family and Child Development at VA Tech. I am looking for people over 50 who are comfortable with their feelings and who are willing to be frank about a delicate subject. The interviews will be the underpinning for my dissertation.

I would want to interview each of you separately for about an hour at your home, and would be audiotaping the interview. No one other than myself, a professional transcriptionist, and my advisor will have access to the transcripts. I want to assure you of the confidentiality of the interviews.

I have practiced as a counselor in Roanoke for 15 years and am hopeful through my recent studies, my dissertation work, and my volunteer work at the RMH Hospice, to be better equipped to counsel with older couples and people anticipating the death of a loved one.

I am hoping this project will be stimulating and interesting to the people who are willing to share their ideas and thoughts with me.

Please think over my request. I will plan to call you in the next week to see what questions you have and whether you might consent to being interviewed.

Sincerely,

Ann H. Martyn, M.S.W.  
Doctoral Candidate, VA Tech  
(703) 989-0250 (home)



## APPENDIX B

## CONSENT FORM

### NATURE OF THE STUDY:

This is an invitation for you to participate in a study of the ways in which people prepare, while married and healthy, for the years after the death of their life partner.

I am interested in knowing the thoughts, feelings and actions people take relative to this possibility in their lives. I am also interested in the ways a husband and wife might discuss or plan for this possibility together.

The purpose of the study is to explore this subject, rather than to prove existing ideas on the subject.

### WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED:

If you, as a couple, are willing to participate, I am requesting an individual interview with each of you. The time needed for each interview would be approximately one and a half hours.

### CONFIDENTIALITY:

The format of the interview will be rather open and wide-ranging. If you share things with the researcher that you would prefer be kept confidential from your mate, your request will be honored.

I will plan to audiotape the conversations and have them transcribed by a typist, so that they can be examined carefully. "Husband" and "wife" will be substituted for your names in the transcripts. The pages of transcript will be examined in detail by myself, and occasionally by a co-researcher or a faculty advisor, who may review some sections with me as I pursue a systematic analysis.

The names of participants will not be included in any book, article, or lecture based on the interview material. Consequently, no quote will be attributed to a named individual.

I will not mention to others the names of the people who participated. Since there will only be at most 14 couples in the study, you may decide to keep your participation under your hat. It is the intention of the researcher to be respectful of and careful to preserve your privacy, but if you are concerned, please consider not mentioning your participation to others.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE STUDY AND AN OFFER OF PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE:

It is my hope that the interviews will be interesting and provocative in a positive way for the couples who participate. I assume some sensitive feelings may arise. You are in charge. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable about continuing the interview, you are free to end it. If you decide that a section of the interview was too personal to be included in the synthesis of the data, I will promise to delete it from the transcription.

Should you as a couple or as an individual feel the need for a session of professional counseling as a consequence of issues raised during the project, I will be willing to offer such an opportunity in my capacity as a trained counselor.

Thank you for your willingness to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Husband's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wife's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

If you have questions, please contact me:

Ann H. Martyn, M.S.W., Doctoral Candidate, VA TECH  
7924 Spotswood Lane  
Boones Mill, Virginia 24065  
(home) 989-0250 (answering service) 772-1195

## APPENDIX C

REHEARSAL FOR SURVIVORSHIP PROJECT: DATA COLLECTION SHEET

Code \*: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of first contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Source: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Directions: \_\_\_\_\_

Ph: \_\_\_\_\_

Consent form signed? \_\_\_\_\_ Copy accepted? \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal consent given for a follow-up interview? \_\_\_\_\_

Year married \_\_\_\_\_ No. of years married \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's age \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic heritage \_\_\_\_\_

Religious affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Educational background \_\_\_\_\_

Professional background \_\_\_\_\_

Number of children \_\_\_\_\_

Number of children living at home \_\_\_\_\_

Number of grandchildren \_\_\_\_\_ Age of oldest \_\_\_\_\_

Date and circumstances of retirement \_\_\_\_\_

Year person plans to retire \_\_\_\_\_

Age respondent expects to live to \_\_\_\_\_

First marriage? \_\_\_\_\_ If no, circumstances of first marriage and lapse of time between separation and remarriage:

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---

Any separations during the marriage because you were not getting along well?

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Any other separations of longer than 10 days? If yes, give dates and circumstances:

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of parents' marriage: \_\_\_\_\_

Circumstances which ended parents' marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Mother died (year) \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ at AGE

Father died (year) \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ at AGE

Circumstances of surviving parent's life after bereavement:

---

---

## APPENDIX D

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

### TOPIC 1

**What are the particulars of the wife's "life plan" relative to her own or her husband's survivorship?**

Context: What is your normal routine? How much time do you spend w/ one another through the day? Traveling? Nights out?

#### Introduction/Explanation

1. Do you sometimes think about how this life partnership will end? Who do you think will live longer? Will you outlive your wife/husband or will s/he outlive you? Do you think of yourself as being the survivor, or being the one to die first?
2. Have your ideas changed over time? How?
3. When do you first recall having thoughts about (his death, hers, your death)? Do you think about this sort of thing with some frequency?
4. What do you think might happen, that is, when you think about your relationship having to end, what thought most often comes to mind? How do you imagine it might happen?
5. Do you have a fairly clear notion of what you think might happen? Would you describe this to me? (Listen for a time frame, i.e., at some approximate age when this might happen, circumstances of death.)
6. What kind of discussions have you and your husband/wife had along these lines?
7. Do you think s/he knows what is in your mind on this subject?
8. What would you guess your spouse would answer to the question: who do you think will die first and what explanation would your spouse give for this guess?
9. Do you think about the opposite happening, i.e., (the one not assumed to die first would die)?
10. How would that circumstance come about? What are the chances of this happening?
11. Let me see if I understand how you see things ... then ask each to state the most clear and persistent ideas and ask for confirmation or elaboration.



Write it in some detail.

Husband's / Wife's Scenario: (circle one)

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## TOPIC 2

### **What factors inform the "life plan"?**

1. Do either you or your mate have a life-threatening condition?
2. How did you arrive at this view of what might likely happen?
3. Did you ever think about needing to prepare for widow/er/hood before you even got married?
4. Do things that your spouse mentions or jokes about have any impact on your thinking? Have you and your husband/wife discussed this topic directly?
5. Have you any "evidence" that would support your view of what you think might happen?
6. Who or what has had an impact on your thinking in this area?
7. Have you talked with others about this general topic?
8. What do you think your parents believed about how their marriage would end? Why do you think that?
9. Did it actually work out that way?

### TOPIC 3

#### **What areas of worry and concern are raised, and what are the strategies for dealing with these worries?**

1. What kinds of concerns come to mind when you think about this (restate scenario) happening?
2. Do you in some ways prepare yourself in case this does happen? How?
3. What worries you the most?
4. Have you shared this with your spouse? Is it something you talk about together? What have you said to your spouse about this? What has s/he said to you?
5. How do you think you would manage \_\_\_\_\_ (the noted worries)?
6. What other worries come to mind?
7. Have you done anything in case that happens? Any plans or concrete actions?
8. To be very clear here, what would you say the main 2 or 3 things are that you worry about should your husband/wife (or should you) die first?
9. And let me hear again the ways you are preparing yourself to handle these things.
10. As we've talked, have other concerns come to mind? What do you think will be your greatest challenge at this time? Continue until the respondent has no more to add.
11. Again, do you discuss these things with your husband/wife?
12. Does s/he raise these worries with you? What have you said to one another on the subject of \_\_\_\_\_ (one of the stated worries). Is s/he aware of your worries? Does s/he try to help you with these worries in some way?
13. Do you worry more about yourself or your spouse, should one of you be left alone? What are the worries for the one to die? What are the worries for the survivor?
14. How do you see yourself getting from the stage of loss to getting along okay?
15. What will be your most valuable resources to help you at this time?
16. Would you change in ways if your wife/husband were not with you?
17. Do you see any value in planning and preparing yourself?

## APPENDIX E

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

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Type of Question

Example

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DESCRIPTIVE

(Sample the terms used)

When you think about which of you might die first, do you have a fairly clear notion of what you think might happen? Would you describe this to me?

What kinds of concerns come to mind when you think about this (restate scenario) happening?

STRUCTURAL

(Identify categories and relationships)

When do you first recall having thoughts about this part of your future?

Have you done anything in case that happens? Any plans or concrete actions?

CONTRAST

(Identify taxonomies within categories)

Do you worry more about yourself or your husband/wife should one of you be left alone?

## APPENDIX F

## SPECIFIC INCIDENT STATEMENTS

In response to DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS:

"I EXPECT to go first. Let's put it this way, I have a strong a strong possibility that I will go first." (W)

"I believe it will be a toss up between who dies first .. and both of us will probably live into a relatively old age barring tragedy or accidents." (H)

"I have accepted it [that her husband may die first] as a possibility. It is a probability too, I would think." (W)

\* \* \*

"I'm constantly nagging about getting rid of stuff. His so-called office upstairs. .. If I'm not around, I say he'll be like one of these old men with piles all around. That's my worst fear." (W)

"One [concern] would be where I would live." (W)

"The thought has occasionally crossed my mind .. would I get married again, or live alone?" (H)

\* \* \*

In response to STRUCTURAL QUESTIONS:

"I think that I had to think about it because while H. was a medical student, he was diagnosed as having very high cholesterol. In fact the hematologist was even surprised he was getting married. He talked with me - did I really want to marry him - you know. .. I guess I knew then that he may not live to be an old person." (W)

"When the children were small I really had a horror of being a widow, because I would think, "What would I do?" I was much more dependent and really very concerned what would we do?" (W)

\*

"I did this sometime ago in preparation for widowhood because I was damned if I was going to get stuck wondering where everything was. I got a book, a notebook. It's (wife's name) notebook. And this money book is a loose leaf notebook and it's all the accounts that we've got, where the boxes are, where the keys are ..." (W)

" ..there's also the problem of a person cooking for themselves. We know this. My mother experienced it. ..I don't really like cooking, but there are economic, planning and logistical problems when you are cooking for a single person." (H)

In response to CONTRAST QUESTIONS:

"Strangely enough I have a lot more apprehensions about what will happen to my wife if I die first than about myself. I really don't have apprehensions about myself. I am an extremely flexible and adaptable person .. But I do have apprehensions about what my wife will do, because she is extremely dependent on me." (H)

"I think he would be more content to be in a retirement home type situation. .. He can wall himself off from petty annoyances or be around people. He can be in a whole room full of people and be in his own world or concentrating on just one thing. .. I think in a nursing home or not even getting quite that far, but in a situation where elderly people are .. my threshold of irritation is much less than his." (W)

**APPENDIX G**



TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS

---

CATEGORY (derived from the literature)	TERMS (direct quotes or derived from the specific statements)
PLAN/OPTIONS	I expect to go first toss up he'll probably go first
CONCERNS/WORRIES	he'll be with piles where I would live remarry or live alone
EVOLUTION OF PLAN/THOUGHT	H's health before marr. as a young mother
ACTIONS/STRATEGIES	put financial documents in order cooking for one being flexible/adaptable not being dependent being able to adapt to a retirement community

---

## APPENDIX H

## RELATIONSHIPS AND RULES

---

### Relationships

is a kind of...  
is a cause for...  
is a step in...  
is a characteristic of...  
is a reason for...  
is a way to do...  
is used for...  
is a place in...  
is a place for...

### Type of rule

strict inclusion  
cause-effect  
sequence  
attribution  
rationale  
means end  
function  
spatial  
location

---

APPENDIX I

## RELATIONSHIPS AMONG TERMS AND CATEGORIES

(General statements about the culture - low level  
abstractions or themes within one interview)

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1. Three options that people weigh are dying first, surviving, or withholding a plan or decision and remaining undecided.
  2. For some people the only alternative to living alone is to remarry.
  3. Rehearsal for widowhood can begin before marriage.
  4. There is a trade off between being dependent and being adaptable.
-

APPENDIX J

CODING KEY 7/16/89  
Revised 10/16/89  
Revised again 10/21/89  
Final revision 12/15/89

The coding is first and foremost designed to tag responses to the 5 basic research questions found on p. 2 of the proposal:

- 1) What are the particulars of each spouse's life plan relative to death and survivorship?
- 2) What are the factors which inform the individual's life plan?
- 3) What are the areas of concern expressed by the informants?
- 4) What strategies do they employ to address these areas of concern?
- 5) Does a joint life plan exist within these couples? In what aspects of the plan is there consensus and is there no consensus?

(\* N.B.: an "H" prefacing a code denotes a husband's response; a "W" denotes a wife's response)

T.des	<b>Question 1) Stated description of death scenario</b>
T.1.h1	Belief that husband would die first
T.1.w1	Belief that wife would die first
T.1.ts	Belief that who will die first is a toss-up
T.1.chg	Evidence of change over time
T.1.dea	View of death
T.1.grief	Attitudes toward grief
T.1.joke	Jokes between spouses which indicate ideas about death scenario, fantasies, worries

**Question 2) Subjective supporting evidence factors which inform the dominant scenario**

- T.2.prts Own or spouse's parents' age(s) at death, or cause of death, or preoccupations/thoughts about death.  
Or knowledge of parents' life plan, parents' scenario, way surviving parent coped; or experiences of extended family members
- T.2.long Presumptions about own or spouse's family's general longevity
- T.2.heal Own or spouse's health picture
- T.2.dem Conventional wisdom that wives typically outlive their husbands
- T.2.wei The weighing process of perceived relevant factors
- T.2.tend Tendency or lack of tendency to plan or worry



**Question 3) Areas of concern when anticipating own survivorship (se=self)**

T.3.spur	Spurs to thoughts on this general topic
T.3.int	First intimations of widow/er/hood
T.3.body	Evidence of spouse monitoring health of the other
T.3.rou	Couple's routine
T.3.se	View of the impact for self should spouse die
T.3.grief	View of how own grief would be
T.3.aft	View of afterlife
T.3.se.lon	loneliness
T.3.se.phs	physical security
T.3.se.fin	finances
T.3.se.sex	sexual needs or longings
T.3.se.hsk	housekeeping: cleaning and cooking
T.3.se.fix	not knowing how to repair and maintain buildings and machinery needed in current lifestyle
T.3.se.per	poor personal habits
T.3.se.emo	emotional instability
T.3.se.liv	motivation to live or work
T.3.se.hom	whether to stay at home or in same town/city
T.3.se.rem	giving other or self permission to remarry
T.3.se.kid	concerns about child: whether child ok or whether they will be mistreated by child
T.3.se.plan	need to plan for self
T.3.se.work	need to figure out how one would work/earn
T.3.se.sic	concern for self should health fail

T.3.wors view of which would have the more difficult time  
T.3.se.sui consideration of suicide

**Areas of concern when anticipating the spouse surviving  
(sp=spouse)**

T.3.sp View of the change for spouse  
T.3.sp.grief View of spouse's grief  
T.3.sp.lon loneliness  
T.3.sp.phs physical security  
T.3.sp.fin finances  
T.3.sp.sex sexual needs and longings  
T.3.sp.hsk housekeeping: cleaning and cooking  
T.3.sp.fix not knowing how to repair and maintain buildings and  
machinery needed in current life style  
T.3.sp.per poor personal habits  
T.3.sp.emo emotional instability  
T.3.sp.rem thoughts or feelings or projections about spouse  
remarrying  
T.3.sp.kid concerns about spouse managing the relationships with the  
children or being able to tolerate the children  
T.3.sp.fri concerns about spouse developing friendships  
T.3.sp.sic concern for spouse should spouse's health fail

**Question 4) What strategies do they employ to address these areas of concern?**

**Strategies for addressing concerns about own survivorship (se=self)**

T.4.se.app	General approach to dilemma
T.4.se.lon	strategies to address loneliness
T.4.se.phs	strategies to address need for physical security
T.4.se.fin	strategies to deal with lack of financial management skills or the change in income
T.4.se.sex	strategies for dealing with sexual needs and longings
T.4.se.hsk	strategies for dealing with housekeeping and meal preparation
T.4.se.fix	strategies for dealing with repair and maintenance
T.4.se.per	strategies for addressing own personal habits
T.4.se.emo	strategies to address own emotional preparation/instability
T.4.se.rem	remarriage mentioned as a specific strategy
T.4.se.fun	funeral plans
T.4.se.sic	strategies if sick and alone
T.4.se.work	strategies for obtaining work
T.4.se.obs	learnings through observation of others
T.4.se.nore	plan for no regrets
T.4.se.res	perceived resources within and outside of self which would assist person at this time

**Strategies for addressing concerns about spouse surviving  
(sp=spouse)**

- T.4.sp.lon something done in anticipation of spouse's loneliness
- T.4.sp.phs something done in anticipation of spouse's need for physical security
- T.4.sp.fin something done in anticipation of spouse's need to be better acquainted with the financial standing
- T.4.sp.sex something done in anticipation of spouse's sexual needs or longings
- T.4.sp.hsk something done in anticipation of spouse's lack of skill in the cooking/cleaning aspects of housekeeping
- T.4.sp.fix something done in anticipation of spouse's lack of skill in the repair and maintenance aspects of the current lifestyle
- T.4.sp.per something done in anticipation of spouse adopting poor personal habits
- T.4.sp.emo something done to prepare spouse emotionally for life without the mate
- T.4.sp.rem something done to prepare spouse for possibility of remarriage
- T.4.sp.sic something done in anticipation of spouse sick and alone

**Question 5) Presence of basic agreement of spouses about which spouse will die first or whether it will be a toss-up**

Information which answers this question will be found reviewing the T.1 information couple by couple

- T.5.talk            Indications of amount of talk on this subject between spouses
- T.5.range           Indications of general range of topics discussed openly by the couple together and with others

**QUESTION 6)  
INFORMATION OF INTEREST FROM INTERVIEWS  
BEARING ON GENERAL AREA**

- T.6.a            Word choice to refer to self dying
- T.6.b            Word choice to refer to spouse dying
- T.6.c            Word choice when refer to both or either dying
- T.6.rem           Considerations or general thoughts about re-marriage
- T.6.sic           Anticipations of illness and decrepitude
- T.6.goal          Future projects; goals
- T.6.com          Informants' comments on the interview process
- T.6.mar          Views on marriage
- T.6.fam          Views on family
- T.6.reli          Views on their religions or churches
- T.6.mf           Views on gender differences
- T.6.old          Views on age differences
- T.6.plan          Views on planning
- H.kind           Husband's kind words about wife
- W.kind           Wife's kind words about husband

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#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1985 - present. Private practice, Boones Mill, Va. Specializing in individual psychotherapy and counseling with couples and families. Current client load consists of individuals ages 11-74. Concerns are most often marital and family problems, anxiety, panic disorders, depression, grief, and poor sense of self.

Current volunteer commitment: Companion to terminally ill patients and their families at the Hospice, Roanoke Memorial Hospital.

1979 - 1983. Associate in the group practice, The Counseling Center, 3144 Brambleton Avenue, Roanoke. Counseling with couples with marital and sexual problems, women with severe symptoms of pre-menstrual syndrome, parents with teenagers. Supervisor to Master's level therapists.

1975 - 1980. Therapist with Mental Health Services of the Roanoke Valley. Therapist with people in crisis, school aged children, and with chronically mentally ill patients. Administered both in-patient and out-patient treatment at Burrell Hospital to permit continuity of care. Supervisor to student interns.

1974 - 1975. Therapist with Wake County Mental Health Center, Raleigh, N.C. Same responsibilities as above.

1972 - 1973. Paid Intern, Training and Development Dept., Blue Cross and Blue Shield of N.C., Durham, N.C. Focus: issues of employee morale, quality of life in the workplace, and career development.

1971 - 1972. Intern, M.S.W. candidate, Wake County Mental Health Center, Raleigh, N.C. Out-patient therapist in supervision.

1969 (Summer) Paid Internship, Caseworker, Alexandria Department of Social Services, Alexandria, Va. Caseworker for families receiving Aid to Dependent Children, Adoptions, and Foster Care.

#### EDUCATION

Doctorate in Marital and Family Therapy, Department of Family and Child Development, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, 1990.

**Dissertation: Rehearsal for Survivorship: A Qualitative Analysis of Later Life Husbands and Wives.**

Master's in Social Work through the School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1975.

**Thesis: An Examination of Discharge Criteria at a Psychiatric Hospital in North Carolina.**

Bachelor of Arts, in English, Hollins College, 1970.

#### ACADEMIC HONORS

Inducted into the National Honor Society Omicron Nu, October, 1988.

Certificat de la langue francaise, La Sorbonne, Paris, 1969.

#### SPECIAL LICENSES

Licensed by the Department of Health Regulatory Board, Richmond, Va. as a Clinical Social Worker in 1979, and as a Professional Counselor in 1987.

#### PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists  
Southern Gerontological Society  
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Virginia Association of Hospices