

THE EFFECTS OF SUDDEN MOTHER DEATH  
ON LATE ADOLESCENT FEMALES

by

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### ABSTRACT

The effects of sudden mother death on late adolescent females aged 20 - 23 was considered in this study. Five female university students who had experienced sudden mother death in their late adolescence completed the Identity Status interview (ISI) and the Grief and Mourning Status Interview and Inventory (GAMSII). These instruments present both general and specific questions to explore the impact of the death on the daughter's self-identity. By using modified versions of both instruments the information revealed insight about how young women: 1) begin to self-construct an identity; and 2) are changed by their own unique experience of mother death.

Initially, it was assumed that the five young women would reveal a portion of their experience identified as complicated mourning as defined by Dr. Therese Rando (1993). The evaluation of Rando's six "R" processes revealed that there was no complicated mourning in any of the narratives shared by the five young women.

For the remaining analysis, the five young women were then individually profiled using the results from both instruments completed. The results from the present study support the conclusion that mother-death in late-adolescence has a significant impact on a daughter's self-identity as a woman. The findings consistently demonstrate that the majority of the participants perceive their previous relationships with their mother as meaningful and influential upon their

choices of self-identity. Four of the five participants had strong consolidation of self-identity as evidenced by high scores of the ISI (>85). Therefore, interpreting these scores alone indicates that part of the answer to the research question is that sudden mother-death did not compromise the entire consolidation process of identity formation in this group of participants.

Closer analysis of the ISI results combined with the responses to the GAMSII revealed that mother-death in late adolescence did affect the women's choices of self-identity. For example the group as a whole all felt the loss of their mother was a loss of a primary resource of their self-esteem as they needed their mother's presence to affirm their progressive choices of constructing their self-identity.

More specifically, the results of the current study demonstrate two points noted in the literature review. First of all, a study by Kirsch, Shore and Kyle (1976) found that relationships with the mother seemed more important than those with the father. Secondly, these results confirm that Gray's (1989) assertion that women are more at risk of chronic mourning if their grief is not properly facilitated (p.6). The results indicate that all of the women disclosed that they had received professional counselling. This may relate to why there were no signs or symptoms of complicated mourning found in the participants. This group of young women was highly self-aware and possessed sophisticated communication skills. In short, the results suggest that these women had resources to assist them to mourn, grow and move on in their self-identity as a woman.

With these results in mind, the implications for counselors and future research were considered.

Examiners:

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## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of:  
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who are all gone but not forgotten

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction: Impetus for study

My interest in complicated mourning was inspired by the stories related to me by my mother's loss of my grandmother. And, at graduate school I read about death, dying and bereavement which lead to my introduction to Dr. Therese Rando's work with complicated mourning. Rando's research offers a framework of how people resolve complicated mourning in terms of processes as opposed to tasks suggested by other authors in the field of bereavement research (Rando, 1993, p.43). In addition, Rando's writing reminded me of some of the details of the stories related to me by my mother's loss of my grandmother. It was amazing how similar my mother's stories and Rando's description about the process of resolving complicated mourning were. Thus, I decided to use Rando's framework exclusively as it provides both a conceptual and experiential base from which to understand complicated mourning (Rando, 1993, p.44).

Complicated mourning is defined as: "a generic term indicating that, given the amount of time since the death, there is some compromise, distortion, or failure of one or more of the six R processes of mourning". The six R processes are: 1) Recognize the loss; 2) React to the

separation; 3) Recollect and reexperience the deceased and the relationship; 4) Relinquish the old attachments to the deceased and the old assumptive world; 5) Readjust to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the old; and 6) Reinvest (Rando, 1993).

My grandmother died suddenly\* of cirrhosis of the liver when my mother was eleven years old. My mother explained the loss of my grandmother as an experience that she never got over, she just learned to live with it. There was no acknowledgement that the death occurred. Immediately she was placed in a Catholic convent by her father and her bedroom window faced her mother's grave. There were no other interventions provided for her and she had no other support from the convent staff or extended family. My mother described her own mourning process as simply crying herself to sleep at night. According to the six R framework, all elements of each component of an "R" process must be completed successfully to avoid the designation of complicated mourning (Rando, 1993).

Anytime my mother tried to discuss her grief experience to the convent staff she was instructed to: 1) pray; 2) put it behind her; and 3) focus on her education to prepare for her future. In other words, forget about it. My mother complied and suffered in silence as a traumatized orphan abandoned by her father in an institutional setting until she left the convent when she married. Unfortunately, my mother related that these

\*Sudden death: "a lack of anticipation which adversely influences the mourner's internal world and coping abilities, thus constituting a trauma" (Rando, 1993, p. 555).

instructions to suppress her grief only made her feel worse. Quite possibly my mother was forced into remaining confused and vacillating within the first 4 “R” processes of mourning as listed earlier by Rando, 1993.

In addition, Rando (1993) shapes her research on the six “R” processes as occurring in three phases of grief and mourning. They are: 1) Avoidance; 2) Confrontation; and 3) Accommodation. Through my own reading on complicated mourning I learned that my mother’s experience appeared to resemble chronic mourning which is an individual syndrome of complicated mourning (Rando, 1993) Chronic mourning is: “acute mourning that persists interminably and involves intense reactions that do not abate over time” (Rando, 1993). It is important to note that complicated mourning symptoms may consolidate into seven different complicated mourning syndromes. If only some of the symptoms are present, or if there is a combination of symptoms from several syndromes but they do not meet the criteria for a particular complicated mourning syndrome, then they are considered complicated mourning symptoms (Rando, 1993, p. 154).

I had experienced chronic mourning as I learned to integrate the sudden death of my mother at the age of sixteen into my own development as a young woman. Chronic mourning indicates that there is a problem with closure and the mourner may be not be able to get beyond the fourth R process. The mourner recognizes that the loved one is dead and fully understands the implications of the death but continues to

function with a constant yearning for the deceased's presence (Raphael, 1983, p.151). In my own experience it took me many years to stop comparing myself to my mother's accomplishments and overcome my fear of my own uniqueness. I desperately wanted to talk to my mother about my fear of not knowing who I was in comparison to her. Her death left me feeling very vulnerable to all of these developmental changes, lost about who to talk to about it, and confused about how to accept her death and move on with my own life without her. As I continued to read Rando's work in-depth, I learned that chronic mourning is the most common form of complicated mourning (Rando, 1993, p.178). Although my mother died twenty years ago, my recovery process did not include the information on chronic mourning and the earliest documented reference I could find about it was in 1965 by G. Gorer (Rando, 1993, p. 695). Therefore, I believe my study could potentially raise awareness about the existence of complicated mourning and improve services provided by mainstream counselling practitioners who are responsible to the general public who may be dealing with issues similar to mine.

Integrating this sudden relational change into one's own self-identity\* during late adolescence may threaten the developmental transformation process known as: "separation-individuation" (Elder, 1993). Therefore an adolescent female who experiences sudden mother-death is

\*Self-Identity: "a subjective feeling of self-sameness and continuity over time which is both conscious and unconscious striving of personal character" (Erikson, 1968; 1969b cited by Kroger, 2000)

paradoxically challenged to become: 1) an instant independent adult; and, 2) simultaneously detach and mourn the premature loss of their mother who reflected their own self-identity to prevent their own vulnerability to chronic mourning. However, if the adolescent is not ready to separate from their mother they may become overwhelmed and lost during their mourning process. The after-effects of this exposure to chronic mourning will reveal other factors contributing to complicated mourning.

### Statement of Research Problem

Women who experience mother death in adolescence are vulnerable to challenges within their progressive identity development (Adams, 1985). The specific loss of a female attachment figure threatens the configuration of a woman's identity especially if the death occurs at the close of adolescence which forms the template for adulthood (Josselson, 1988). In late adolescence females are often still struggling to separate from their parents to become independent (Rando, 1988). The necessity of the mother-daughter bond to model separation, selfhood and womanhood is supported by a combination of both social learning and symbolic interaction theory (Adams, 1985).

The impact of parental death may have different effects on adolescents depending on their individual stage of development (Balk, 1991; Balk, Tyson-Rawson, & Colletti-Wetzel, 1993). Adolescent females who experience mother death may face specific developmental challenges

to their psychosocial maturity (Josselson, Greenberger, and McConochie, 1992). According to Adams and Gullota (1989) adolescent females who have clear sex-role identification with a significant female adult appear to establish a more functional ego identity. They claim that a functional ego identity refers to a process of personality development and personality provides several basic functions for behaviour. They also propose that:

identity, as the central core of personality, maintains the following essential functions: First, it provides the structure for understanding who we are and the substance to the question "Who am I?" ... Second, it is the mechanism, or the ego structure, that provides meaning and direction through the construction of reality. Third, an identity enables a person to make choices based on alternatives, thereby providing a sense of personal control, or free will. Fourth, identity functions to provide an integration or consistency between values, beliefs, or commitments. And finally, an identity enables a person to realize his or her potential. That is, it provides a personal sense of future goals (p.245).

Therefore, identity formation in adolescent females may be compromised due to the premature loss of their mother.

In addition, adolescent females are more at risk of chronic mourning if their grief process is not properly facilitated and supported (Gray, 1987). Chronic mourning is a disorder of attachment which develops following the loss of a relationship in which the mourner was highly dependent upon the deceased (Parkes and Weiss cited in, Rando, 1993). As previously mentioned, chronic mourning is a syndrome of complicated mourning.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of sudden mother death on late adolescent females aged 19-30 in terms of their self-

identity choices in the areas of personal vocation, family and spirituality. According to Viorst (1986), in the late-adolescent phase of ego development we begin to include: "values and commitments which are connected with our place in the wider world" which I believe extends beyond our common definition of late adolescence ending at the age of nineteen (p.153). Instead it is my belief that the late-adolescent phase of development can include a higher age range up to the age of thirty. In addition, two tools will be used with this extended age range to explore with five (5) women relationships between their self-identity choices in reflection of their experience of sudden mother-death in late adolescence. Limiting the number of study participants to five is an intentional to insure feasibility of the study and to allow each woman to maintain her reflective process upon her choices in reaction to her mother's death. To clarify, it is not my intention to actively engage in the participants' grief process. Instead my goal is to ensure the correct use of each tool is maintained by guiding the women to disclose information related to the questions used in each tool. Therefore in order to monitor the participants safely five is both a feasible and responsible number to proceed with.

The specific research tools I have selected are highly structured although somewhat exploratory in their style of questioning. This should maintain a specific focus on the information I intend to explore. I refined the use of these tools for the purpose of assisting the women to explore their perceptions of their experience of mother death but only within the

boundaries set by those questions. In effect, I anticipated that this style of questioning produces significant information about how this experience impacted their self-identity choices as a woman. In short, my study will be a descriptive exploration of a daughter's perception of her mother's death through the use of two tools refined to explore the impact of the death on the daughter's self-identity. By using a modified version of both Marcia and Archer's (1993) Identity Status Interview (ISI) and Rando's (1993) Grief and Mourning Status Interview and Inventory (GAMSII) the information will reveal insight about how women: 1) begin to self-construct an identity; and 2) are changed by their own unique experience of mother death (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993). This information is germane to my research question.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

To date, not much information is available in the bereavement literature to assist this population with this type of death experience. In fact Rando (1993) is the only author who has attempted to design a clinical tool to organize the material required in a comprehensive assessment of grief and mourning. Zall's (1994) research confirmed the notion that the same-sex parent is needed for development. His study revealed that women who experienced mother death in childhood also had problems with parental functioning as they lacked experience and were deprived of role models (Zall, 1994; Friedman, 1980; Adams, 1985; Murphy, 1986; Dignan, 1965 cited by Marcia, 1980; Lenhardt et al., 2000).

Wellisch et al, (1992) studied the psychological functioning of daughters of breast cancer patients. Daughters reported two levels of long range impact on their own development: 1) at an interactional level the mother's illness and subsequent death created a redirection of family life; younger, dependent daughters felt overwhelmed and deprived of attention and resources previously available when the family unit was intact; and, 2) at a representational level, daughters inherited contrasting views of the mother being both well and sick; and, when fused with the daughter's nascent self-concept this disparity is carried into adulthood. The data

indicated that those subjects who were adolescents had the greatest adjustment problems.

According to Gray (1987), young women who can attach to another adult after losing a mother have the best chance of developing without serious ongoing difficulties. For adolescent women, identity formation and the development of an autonomous sense of self involves defining oneself in relation to and in connection with others. That is, the female sense of self and the development of this notion are relational in nature (Scott-Moncrieff, 1997; Friedman 1980). As Hotelling and Forrest (1985) state: "female development is based on fusion with this figure (primary attachment figure). As a result, the young girls feminine identity is based on relationships to and connections with other people and is threatened by separation" (p.185). Similarly, Josselson's (1998) research revealed that women are more relational and identity for women is a primarily "unconscious process" (Pescitelli, 1998, p.2).

At this point in my literature review, I noticed a repetitive theme forming with the concepts of fusion, attachment and same-sex parent. In addition, I observed in Marcia's (1980) work on women's identity formation that he mentions how Kirsch, Shore and Kyle (1976) found that relationships with the mother seemed more important than those with the father (cited in Marcia, 1980). However, Marcia's (1980) work has also been criticized by feminist writers because his identity status approach was initially developed and validated using only college males (Marcia and

Friedman, cited in Pescitelli, 1998). Furthermore Marcia's work is built upon Erik Erikson's research which portrayed women's identity as biologically driven (cited by Archer, 1992 in Pescitelli's 1998 paper). Pescitelli (1998) supports Erikson's general contribution to the study of identity as it is substantial and its value need not be completely dismissed due to the existence of gender bias. Erickson's research can act as a suitable starting point in examining the identity development of women but his data needs to be cautiously interpreted.

On the topic of bereaved adolescent females and their self-identity choices, with which this theses is most concerned we must explore Josselson's research on the changes and advancements she has contributed in women's identity development (Pescitelli, 1998; cited by Gilligan, in Raja, McGee, & Stanton, 1991; Josselson, 1980). Josselson originally began her work in 1971 doing extensive interviews with college women and she completed a follow-up study twelve years later. Her work concentrated on the identity status research previously tested by James Marcia. However, Josselson's efforts were more focused on understanding the internal and developmental roots of identity formation in women (Pescitelli, 1998). As stated earlier, Josselson's (1998) research mentioned that identity for women is a primarily "unconscious process" (Pescitelli, 1998, p.2). At this point in my review I was inspired to use research tools in my study that would assist female participants to articulate their unconscious identity issues and potentially reveal their

unconscious reactions to the death of their mother in reflection of their choices of self-identity to continue to advance our conscious understanding of women's identity development.

Josselson's (1988) research was distinguished because she believed that women had forged their own paths, with independence as their central theme. Among the women she studied social and religious themes were more important to women than political or occupational themes. She further discovered that relationships have a fundamental importance to women and that women move along in the world through relational connections so that who they know has a lot to do with who they become (Pescitelli, 1998; Lenhardt et al., 2000). In summary, Josselson's research indicates that 85% of the women in her study remain close to their mothers, and 50% further chose their mother as the person they feel closest or second closest to in the world (Pescitelli, 1998). This result creates an interesting indication about the possibility of what my study may discover about women who developed in the absence of a mother.

According to Lenhardt and McCourt (2000) there are specific developmental factors that place adolescent daughters at increased risk for complicated grief reactions to a mother's death (p.2). These factors include:

- 1) differences in styles of relationship building between female and male adolescents;
- 2) the mother-daughter separation-individuation process;

- 3) the surviving fathers response to maternal death/gender differences in the grieving process;
- 4) the daughters' shift to the maternal role;
- 5) sons' reluctance to acknowledge their grief (p.5).

The authors also mention two specific studies where both sets of results indicate that females experience a greater level of mourning than males (Meshot and Leitner, cited in Lenhardt and McCourt, 2000); and, that women who had experienced the deaths of their mothers were at higher risk to experience unresolved grief than were men who experienced this loss (Zisook and Lyons, cited in Lenhardt and McCourt, 2000). Furthermore Zisook and Lyons also noted that unresolved grief was present more often in response to death of a mother than to the death of a father (Lenhardt and McCourt, 2000).

All of the researchers reviewed so far have revealed that adolescent development is a complex process and various opinions exist about how the concept of identity develops for each gender. I will attempt to avoid previous misunderstandings or generalizations in the present body of literature by adhering to the interview protocols accompanying the tools mentioned in the methods section of this thesis. As stated earlier, Marcia and Archer's (1993) Identity Status Interview (ISI) is a research instrument previously associated with gender bias. Historically this tool is using an operationalization of Eriksonian theory (Marcia et al., 1993). However, it has been re-designed to support the developmental process

of identity for both genders (Pescitelli, 1998, p.7). Also there is substantial research evidence using this tool that demonstrates females have a more complex task in identity formation (Waterman, cited in Marcia et al., 1993; cited by Gilligan, cited in Raja et al, 1991).

### Research Question

How does sudden mother death in adolescent females aged 19-30 effect their self-identity as a woman?

### Definition of Concepts in Research Question

Sudden death: “a lack of anticipation which adversely influences the mourner’s internal world and coping abilities, thus constituting a trauma” (Rando, 1993, p. 555).

Adolescent: “a person between childhood and adulthood who went through many changes and attempting to resolve the universal developmental question of Who Am I ?”  
(Viorst, 1986, p.150-1).

Self-Identity: “a subjective feeling of self-sameness and continuity over time which is both conscious and unconscious striving of personal character”  
(Erikson, 1968; 1969b cited by Kroger, 2000).

## CHAPTER 3

### **METHOD**

#### Description of Interview Procedures:

Over an eleven day period from June 19 to June 30, 2003 I interviewed five women for 2 hours each and administered two research instruments with questions in the area of identity (Marcia et al., 1993) and bereavement (Rando, 1993). All of the interviews were conducted at the University of Victoria campus in the same research office in the MacLaurin building. Three interviews took place between 1:00 and 2:00 pm in the afternoon, one was scheduled at 9:00 am in the morning to accommodate a participant's exam schedule and the final interview was scheduled at 5:00 pm in the evening to accommodate a participant's work schedule. Every interview was conducted by me, audio taped and notes were written on each form as each participant responded to each question. All of the interviews were transcribed in full within 2 weeks of the original interview date. Each interview took approximately 11 hours to transcribe in full.

#### Participants:

Seven female volunteers responded to the poster advertised on the university campus approved by the university human research ethics committee for distribution. Each participant was pre-screened in a telephone interview to ensure they met all of the criteria to be a candidate

in the study. Two volunteers were excluded as their mothers had died only six to eighteen months prior to the commencement of my study. In my research proposal I stated that one criteria to prevent interviewing young women in crisis was to screen out any participant who had lost their mother less than two years prior to my study (see p.21). Therefore I proceeded with five female University of Victoria students who met this criteria with the actual interviews. Two participants had just graduated at the undergraduate level in the spring of 2003, another two participants had just completed their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of undergraduate degree studies, and the final individual was in the process of completing her final year of her undergraduate degree in summer session. At the time period in which the study took place all of the participants were between the ages of 20 to 23.

During the pre-screening telephone calls, each participant made various disclosures about their personal family history and their experience with the death of their mother. One of the mothers had committed suicide and the circumstances surrounding her death potentially indicated risk factors known to increase complications for mourners as her death may have been preventable (Rando, 1993, p.568). Therefore, I decided to do pre-cautionary research of individual follow-up resources available in bookstores, on the internet, and in the community in order to minimize any potential emotional risks noted in section "I" numbers 8 through 10 in my ethics contract. I created a list of eight resources designed to address both specific and general issues that

related to any of the participants' potential future concerns of mother death without drawing any undue attention to the daughter whose mother committed suicide.

I distributed this resource list to each participant after both questionnaires were completed. Since each participant was promised a \$40.00 gift certificate to the bookstore of their choice in appreciation for their participation, I suggested to each participant that they may wish to purchase the resource items outlined on the list if they wanted or needed them after the interview. In addition, each participant was guided through a 5 point informed consent form so they all understood their rights to confidentiality and anonymity. And finally, after seven days from the date of their original interview I contacted each participant by telephone to ensure they were all comfortable after the interview and enquired if they were experiencing any emotional reactions they might need to discuss further (see section 9b ethics review). All participants supported the progress of including their data in my thesis research.

#### Instruments:

Initially, I intended to address the research question through the use of two data collective approaches. The first form used was the Identity Status Interview: Late Adolescent College Form (1993) by James Marcia and Sally Archer (Marcia, et al., 1993). The second form used was Rando's (1993) Grief and Mourning Status Interview and Inventory (GAMSII) (Rando, 1993). Permission to use both tools had been granted

with the planned modifications of each one (Marcia, 2003, 2001; Archer, 2002; in personal communication; and Rando, 1993, p. 665;). However, on recommendation from my committee the length of the interview was further reduced from three hours to two hours. As a result, the number of questions used in the Identity Status Interview (ISI) had to be reduced. Originally the ISI had a total of 91 questions. It was changed to 55 primary questions and 36 supplemental questions to create a more complimentary balance of information requests with the other instrument. As the Grief and Mourning Interview and Inventory (GAMSII) only had four descriptive open-ended questions. This change made sense as I did not wish to overwhelm or exhaust the participants with too many questions in the use of the first instrument as it may have compromised the validity and contributions of the second instrument with the new 2 hour time constraint for the entire interview.

Therefore, the specific modifications of the ISI instrument involved three items. As noted above, the ISI was condensed from 91 questions to 55 primary questions of importance with 36 supplemental questions; and, the supplemental questions would only be used if I as the investigator needed to further elaborate or clarify information from a participant's response to a primary question. This change alleviated the amount of time used in the interview itself on this instrument and reduced the amount of time needed for analyzing this instrument. So, we will review an abbreviated analysis of the ISI later on in the results section.

The second item I changed on the ISI instrument was the title of the first domain. It was titled "general opening" however I thought it would be better understood by the participants as a more distinct domain if it was titled "personal history". The reason I needed the title to cue the participants memory was because I would be referring to the four domain titles distinctly in question 91 of the ISI instrument which was specifically related to my study (Marcia, 2003 – personal communication). The third item I changed was in the original ISI age range of the original format of the ISI used for scoring late adolescents (Marcia et al., 1993). In its original format the ISI for late adolescents was only intended for use with participants aged 18 to 22 (Marcia et al. 1993, p.205). However I expanded the age range to 19 to 30 since it was unlikely that I would find enough female participants for my study who were all aged 18 to 22 and who had also all experienced mother-death in late-adolescence (Archer, 2002, - personal communication). Yet in the actual interviews I discovered that all of the actual study participants were in the age range of 20 to 23 and all of their mothers had died when the participants were between the ages of 16 to 19. Hence I decided to make one final adjustment to the scoring criteria of the ISI to be focused on the age range of 18 to 23 in the final analysis.

Both Marcia and Archer had demonstrated to me in person and at two international conference presentations (2001 & 2002) how the structure of the ISI instrument could be changed. After 15 months of

learning about the ISI, I became familiar with the core parts of the interview method as well as how to present it to people (Waterman, 2003 – personal communication). Historically, the ISI questions have been used in 300 studies over 25 years (Marcia et al., 1993). Thus I was fairly certain that the abbreviated ISI instrument would be a strong and collaborative instrument in combination with the GAMSII.

Prior to the commencement of my study, there were no final changes recommended by my committee to the GAMSII. However, once the study was completed it became evident to me that it was not necessary to analyze unconscious reactions or decisions the women may have had to their mother's death. As all of the women I interviewed were very open-minded and sophisticated in their level of self-awareness and subsequent response to their mother's death. Also, all of the women came from well educated and socioeconomic backgrounds which had finances to fund personal counseling and anti-depressant medication to assist the women to cope with their range of reactive symptoms of grief. Therefore, it was decided that any analysis of their unconscious reactions to their mother's death may have been speculative and unrelated to Rando's six "R" processes of mourning. Thus, these analyses were not conducted.

#### Analysis of Data:

After the participants answered the two questionnaires (ISI and GAMSII), the instruments were analyzed by myself. To score the ISI, one will have read the directions in chapter nine of Marcia's handbook (Marcia

et al., 1993, p.205-214). The main concern in scoring the ISI is that sufficient questioning took place during the interviews to determine that the verbal descriptions to validate the existence of exploration and commitment are in detailed description on the audiotape. The variables of exploration and commitment are intended to account for identity formation, change and re-formulation (Marcia et al., 1993, p. 205). The GAMSII does not require any advanced training to score it. However, one ought to be familiar with Rando's research and have previously worked with bereaved clientele to use it. Since I have 12 years of clinical experience with semi-structured interviews and have worked primarily with bereaved populations, I felt confident I could identify the conscious themes from the participants' responses to the four questions in the GAMSII (Cook, 1995, p.117) and compare them to the conscious themes described in the ISI. Specifically, I will observe and listen for descriptions from the participants about their perception of how they dealt with the death by quoting certain patterns in their statements about identity and mourning from their transcripts.

Yet, it is important to note that my use of Erikson's model of identity is an intentional research decision. Also, my study is tightly focussed by only using the two instruments I have selected. In consequence, I am aware that this design decision will also somewhat constrain the data collected. However, since I have personally experienced mother-death in my own adolescence, I chose to responsibly prepare for the interaction

with the study participants by choosing a design with two focused instruments which simultaneously maintained a distance from them. As paradoxical as this study design may initially appear it does serve the purpose of the research which is to expand the current information available on the adolescent bereavement experience of mother-death from a specific perspective.

#### The ISI:

Specifically, four of the eight sections of the ISI were used as they are the most relevant to my research question (Knowles, 1998 – personal communication). The four sections are referred to as domains and the domain titles used were: 1) personal history; 2) vocational plans; 3) marriage and the role of spouse; and, 4) religious beliefs. According to Marcia and Archer (1993) the commitment pattern for women is often marked by the integration of commitment in several domains. Thus, in the interviews I watched for integrating themes running through the individual domains of each respondent's answers. Also, it is important to note that Marcia and Archer (1993) state that the variable of exploration is more of a priority than the variable of commitment in the consolidation process of identity. In the results section, I provide a brief summary of how each woman met the criteria for both exploration and commitment based on the assessment standards listed in detail in the next paragraph. In short, the important matter of exploration is that it is self-initiated, in-depth, authentic, and attention has been paid to alternatives; and finally, consequences of

their pursuit have been weighed (Marcia et al., 1993, p. 207). Commitment as a less important variable simply indicates that there is a very real narrowing of one's direction in life but this direction is adaptable. Finally however, the most important scoring observation during the interviews is to remember that it is the process of identity formation, not the content, that is being assessed in each domain of questions (Marcia et al., 1993, p. 212).

To clarify, it may appear that Marcia and Archer's (1993) instrument relies on the overall tone of the interview to analyze the participants' choices about the development of their own self-identity (Marcia et al., 1993, p.212). Yet this is not the case. There are two very detailed and separate sets of assessment criteria to determine the degree of exploration and commitment in each participant's process of shaping their own identity. There are four criteria required to assess exploration.

They are:

- 1) Knowledge and thoughtfulness about ideas that are realistic;
- 2) Activity directed toward self-initiated, in-depth gathering of information & researching by reading books or meeting & speaking with people about a specific subject;
- 3) Considering alternative potential identity elements & demonstrating through experimentation that attention to alternatives & the consequences of them have been weighed;
- 4) Desire to make an early decision about the best-fitting vocational, ideological, and interpersonal alternatives with which to begin adulthood.

There are six criteria required to assess commitment. They are:

- 1) Knowledge expressed articulately demonstrating clarity and experience of what they want to do with their life;

- 2) Activity directed toward implementing a chosen identity path by demonstrating external indicators of putting their internal thoughts into action;
- 3) Emotional tone expressed as solid self-assuredness and poised self-confidence;
- 4) Identification with significant others changes from idealization to realistic self-interested appraisal;
- 5) Projecting one's personal future by demonstrating commitment & producing a reasonable 5 year plan;
- 6) Resistance to being swayed involving 3 aspects: a) acknowledgement of the possibility of change; b) linkage of possible change to the individual's abilities and societal opportunities; and c) reluctance to change except under fairly pressing circumstances.

These ten descriptive measures will be used to identify the two outcome measures of: 1) degree of exploration; and 2) degree of commitment: this leads to the assessment of an individual's identity has been thoroughly explored and is both personally reflective and expressive (Marcia et al., 1993, p.217).

Each participant received a brief summary of whether an identity was formed and to what degree it met with various criteria of the ISI noted above in the form of a profile. For example, a participant may say she "thought about" marrying a certain individual but she must also give details in her reply to demonstrate actions connected to her thoughts/ideas. Each profile described how a participant's identity was affected by mother-death if this information presents itself in the data, including their patterns and/or themes of identity and mourning. For instance, each time a participant clearly articulates part or all of the content of a specific criterion used to assess exploration and commitment in any domain, she was given either a half or full point for each corresponding response (Marcia et al., 1993,

p.205). Similarly their total score of points determines the degree of consolidation of their overall self-identity. Also, if it is relevant and/or significant each woman's ranking of the four domains in question 91 was featured within the profile. Any patterns in the participants' ranking was highlighted to determine whether it is related to their own experience of mother-death. However, this analysis is explained in more depth in the results section.

#### The GAMSII:

Originally, the Grief and Mourning Status Interview and Inventory (GAMSII) was designed to organize the material required in a comprehensive assessment of grief and mourning (Rando, 1993, p.252). It has not been subject to the rigorous development, standardization, or norming as a psychometric measure. Part three of the GAMSII, offers a structured interview schedule arranging 10 different loss-related topic areas designated section A to J. This information enables evaluation of the situation with regard to the six "R" processes of mourning (Rando, 1993, p.253).

#### The Six "R" Processes of Mourning:

- 1) Recognize the loss;
- 2) React to the separation;
- 3) Recollect and reexperience the deceased and the relationship;
- 4) Relinquish the old attachments to the deceased and the old assumptive world;
- 5) Readjust to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the

old; and,

6) Reinvest.

All elements of each component of an “R” process must be completed successfully to avoid the designation of complicated mourning (Rando, 1993, p.149). Complicated Mourning is defined as: “a generic term indicating that, given the amount of time since the death, there is some compromise, distortion, or failure of one or more of the six R processes of mourning”. Rando’s research offers a framework of how people resolve complicated mourning in terms of processes as opposed to tasks suggested by other authors in the field of bereavement research (1993, p.43). Rando’s framework provides both a conceptual and experiential base from which to understand complicated mourning (1993, p.44). It is my hope that this tool will generate meaningful information about how women choose an identity in the absence of a mother.

The GAMSII interview questions used in this study were taken from Rando’s (1993) Grief and Mourning Status Interview and Inventory (GAMSII) in section E which outlines the topic of “changes since the death” (p.675, E:1-4). Section “E” of the GAMSII is an interactive interview and the questions within it are relevant to my research question. The remaining portions of the GAMSII were not included as they are more appropriately used for in-depth treatment of complicated mourning

(Knowles, 1997 - personal communication). Four selected questions in section E were used:

1. What changes if any, have occurred to you, in you, and in your life since your mother's death?
2. Do you feel changed by this death?
3. If this death has affected the way you look at and live life, how has it done so? and,
4. What, if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss?

In my opinion, Section E's questions (GAMSII) as a data collection approach may complement the Identity Status Interview (ISI) by reporting similar information in a different way to further enhance our understanding of how these women have consciously re-built their identity in the face of all these changes in response to the loss of their mother.

Section E is titled: "Changes in the mourner and the mourner's life since the death". It is designed to help establish the extent of the mourner's readjustment and accommodation to the loss; and, identify the types and extent of changes brought about by the loss, as well as their repercussions (Rando, 1993, p. 261). The questions serve as general guidelines and may be tailored to meet the specific requirements of the situation (Rando, 1993, p. 256-61). In my view there is reason to believe that the women in my study revealed a portion of their experience that resembles complicated mourning; and, quite possibly how the death and/or the subsequent mourning impacted the formation of their self-identity as a woman.

Therefore, I used Rando's (1993) six "R"'s as a framework for analysis to assess the common themes of mourning amongst the women's responses to the four questions of the GAMSII. In addition, I highlighted which of the three phases of grief and mourning the women are in according to Rando's model. I also discuss how the loss of their mother consciously influenced their decisions in their own self-development. Finally, I explored any hints in the women's disclosures which may be after-effects of the loss.

Once the assessments were completed for both instruments our focus will be whether or not the findings from each one can relate or answer the main research question in my study noted on page 13 of this thesis. The first step was to look for evidence in the reflective responses/narratives that sudden mother-death did affect their choices of self-identity. Secondly, we looked for evidence in the same responses/narratives that their identity formation may have been compromised due to premature loss of their mother.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### Results of the **abbreviated** ISI:

All of the participants in the study were asked the same 55 primary questions in the Identity Status Interview (ISI). Three participants had a total of 48 responses to the 55 primary questions; one participant had 50 responses; and, one had 52 responses. Patterns in the responses began to emerge as basic information revealed itself in each interview. For example, none of the women had experienced the death of both parents during adolescence which ruled out question number six which asked when their father had died. As a result, the greatest potential score for any of the women would be 54 out of 55. Moreover in question number 24, if a woman was very strongly attached to a certain vocation then it was possible that question number 25 and 26 could be eliminated. Thus reducing a final potential score to 52. In addition, all of the women indicated in question number 28 that they intended to be legally married which automatically ruled out question 35 and 36 of the primary questions. Therefore the greatest potential score was reduced to 50 out of 55. Only two of the five women in the study were single so this status affected the responses provided in primary questions 49 and 50. Consequently, the final score could be potentially further reduced to 48.

Religious services attended and religious beliefs expressed also showed some variability in the answers to questions 69 and 70. If a woman answered no to question number 69 then question number 70 was eliminated. Hence a potential final score could have been 47. There was also one woman who had no current contact with her father and consequently she could not answer question 79 which further reduced a potential final score of 46. Finally, question 90 of the primary questions also seemed to be slightly obscure to respond to by three participants who simultaneously held both religious and agnostic beliefs.

Each participant was asked to reply to at least one supplementary question for clarification of information and one participant was asked 17 of the 36 supplementary questions due to the complex nature of her circumstances. Every participant was asked to clarify information through the supplementary questions in the domain of religious beliefs. Three participants were asked for further clarification in the domain of marriage and the role of spouse. And finally, two participants were asked to clarify the same supplementary question (#22) in the domain of vocational plans. In the very first interview, I did experience a mechanical problem with the tape recorder while administering the ISI but it only blurred one response on the audiotape.

Overall the ISI assisted the women to explore some of their choices in their identity and reflect how their individual development changed after their experience with mother-death. The ISI questions seemed to capture

the complexity of how many of their priorities in their identity changed in reaction to their mother's death. As the assessor, I was satisfied that all of the participants had disclosed fairly consistent and meaningful information answering at least 48 to a maximum of 52 of the 55 primary questions.

There also appeared to be relevance in the same supplementary questions being repetitively asked by myself in the same two domains of:

1) marriage and role of the spouse; and 2) religious beliefs.

#### ISI Profiles:

As stated earlier, the ISI has two sets of assessment criteria used to determine the degree of exploration and commitment in each participant's choices involved in the development of their self-identity. The scoring of the ISI data involves a brief profile of each participant with one or more selected statements highlighted from their various responses in their transcript to provide evidence of the presence of the 10 specific criteria relating to exploration and commitment. Again the specific criteria are as follows:

#### Exploration:

- 1) Knowledge and thoughtfulness about ideas that are realistic;
- 2) Activity directed toward self-initiated, in-depth gathering of information and researching by reading books or meeting and speaking with people about a specific subject;
- 3) Considering alternative potential identity elements and demonstrating through experimentation that attention to alternatives and the consequences of them have been weighed;
- 4) Desire to make an early decision about the best-fitting vocational, ideological, and interpersonal alternatives with which to begin adulthood.

### Commitment:

- 1) Knowledge expressed articulately demonstrating clarity and experience of what they want to do with their life;
- 2) Activity directed toward implementing a chosen identity path by demonstrating external indicators of putting their internal thoughts into action;
- 3) Emotional tone expressed as solid self-assuredness and poised self-confidence;
- 4) Identification with significant others changes from idealization to realistic self-interested appraisal;
- 5) Projecting one's personal future by demonstrating commitment & producing a reasonable 5 year plan;
- 6) Resistance to being swayed involving 3 aspects: a) acknowledgement of the possibility of change; b) linkage of possible change to the individual's abilities and societal opportunities; and c) reluctance to change except under fairly pressing circumstances.

### Scoring Process:

The ten scoring criteria listed above are explicit and provide a certain amount of reliability with the ISI instrument. The numeric score assigned to the presence or absence of each criteria helps to remove some of the subjective judgment of the data. In addition, the ISI as a tool is simpler and easier to administer as the ISI appears more consistent with its structure and feasibility.

### ISI Profiles: Participant #1:

Part 1: Exploration:

1) Knowledge and thoughtfulness about ideas that are realistic. Participant #1 was 22 at the time of the ISI interview, and she had just graduated from university with her first degree. It had been approximately three years since the death of her mother. Participant #1 expressed her ideas in a

realistic way and her knowledge and thoughtfulness were most predominantly explained in the domain of vocational plans in response to question #18 where she is asked about the drawbacks of two professional fields (see Appendix A for all of the ISI questions).

She states: "Medicine requires long hours; stress; politics with government with working hours and bad conditions;

English is an enjoyable subject without many jobs;"

2) Activity directed toward self-initiated, in-depth gathering of information and research by reading books or meeting and speaking with people about a specific topic. Participant #1 disclosed that after her mother's death, she had multiple counseling sessions with a professional therapist who assisted her to examine her mother's struggle with depression and subsequent marital and parental conflicts. Participant #1 wanted to live a happier life in comparison to her mother's struggle with it. Therefore, Participant #1 was able to share the ideas she learned in counseling about how she wanted to be in future relationships with people in her adult roles in her personal life. Participant #1 could share self-initiated, in-depth ideas about her own self-exploration about how she would be identified in the domain of marriage and the role of spouse. She specifically asserted that her identity in marriage would be based upon personal independence in responses to questions 38, 44, and 45 (see Appendix A).

She states: "My decision about marriage came easy & I thought about it in-depth; I just don't want to have emotional dysfunction or co-dependency in marriage (38);

My parents marriage was traditional & their marriage was emotionally dysfunctional (44) (45).”

3) Considering alternative potential identity elements and demonstrating through experimentation that attention to alternatives and the consequences have been weighed is present in the domain of vocational plans in questions 18 (as previously noted in Participant #1’s exploration criteria #1) and again in the domain of marriage and the role of spouse: 37, 38, 49, 50, and 57.

She states: “Medicine requires long hours and stress; politics with government with working hours and bad conditions;

English is an enjoyable subject without many jobs (18);

Loneliness is the disadvantage to being single; but the advantage of being single is more independence and no others to consider with choices (37);

My decision about marriage came easy and I thought about it in-depth; I just don’t want to have emotional dysfunction or co-dependency in marriage (38);”

Questions 49 & 50 are information requests about her fiancé:

“He feels good about my ideas on marriage as we have the same ideas about it (49);

We both have shared and mutual goals and want equality and good communication (50);”

Question 57 requests that the participant take a position of numerical ranking to establish its hierarchical priority in her self-exploration of identity.

On a 7-point scale 7 means extremely important and this participant ranked marriage and the role of spouse as a: “Seven (57).”

Although numerous examples from Participant #1's transcript support her in scoring a full point in criteria number three, she does not actually express any demonstration through experimentation with her actions.

4) Desire to make an early decision about the best-fitting vocational, ideological, and interpersonal alternatives with which to begin adulthood. This participant was very focused, mature, intelligent, and an achievement oriented individual from a young age. For example, question 16 in the domain of vocational plans asks: When did you first become interested in university? and, her reply was: "From grade nine I wanted a science degree". In addition, her answers to questions 28-34, 37-41, 45, 46, 49-50, and 57 further substantiate her clarity about making decisions early about her roles as an adult (see Appendix A for all ISI questions).

She states: "I have been engaged since the summer of 2002 and we are living together as a heterosexual couple and we will get married; (28)

We're saving money to elope in Thailand; (29)

Due to my parental situation we will elope; (30)

I want to marry an honest, supportive, positive man who I share common interests and share goals with; (31)

I want to be a working wife and if kids arrive then we want one parent to be at home; (32) (33)

My mother had no focus outside of being a wife/mother and caretaker and she thrived on being needed; if she had been busier may-be she would have been less depressed. Myself: I will be busy working and involved in things inside and outside the home and marriage. (34)

Loneliness is the disadvantage to being single; but the advantage of being single is more independence and no others to consider with choices (37);

My decision about marriage came easy and I thought about it in-depth; I just don't want to have emotional dysfunction or co-dependency in marriage (38);"

Participant #1 describes in an authentic manner how she has paid attention to alternative relationship patterns such as her parents' marriage, and the consequences of their traditional style of relating to one another.

Supplementary questions in ISI tool:

"It's just an easy-going relationship; (39)

No one was a factor in my decision to marry; (40) and I've never changed my thinking about marriage; (41)

I would describe my parents' marriage as traditional; (44) and my parents' marriage was emotionally dysfunctional (45) and I want my marriage to be less co-dependent than theirs; (46)"

Return to primary questions of ISI:

Questions 49 and 50 are information requests about her fiancé:

"He feels good about my ideas on marriage as we have the same ideas about it (49);

We both have shared and mutual goals and want equality and good communication (50);"

Question 57 requests that the participant take a position of numerical ranking to establish its hierarchical priority in her self-exploration of identity.

On a 7-point scale 7 means extremely important and this participant ranked marriage and the role of spouse as a: "Seven (57)."

Exploration Score: 3.5 out of 4

Part 2: Commitment:

1) Knowledge expressed articulately demonstrating clarity and experience of what they want to do with their life. As previously stated in part one of Participant #1's exploration process: criteria 1, 3, and 4 all indicated in her responses that she was prepared and involved in plans for her future role as a married student. In addition, Participant #1 ranked her vocation as a "6" on a 7-point scale (where 7 means extremely important) in question number 27. Finally, in question #24 in the domain of vocation, Participant #1 clearly indicates that her parents never pressured her to do any one job or profession over another. However her parents did encourage her to do what makes her personal happiness a priority in her adulthood.

2) Activity directed toward implementing a chosen identity path by demonstrating external indicators of putting her internal thoughts into action. In question 17 in the domain of vocation, Participant #1 mentions that she was attracted to medicine because she thought it was a neat career where you could be self-employed and be involved in helping people.

Also, in question 28 in the domain of marriage and the role of spouse, Participant #1 indicated that she had a plan to move to Kelowna with her fiancé where they would both work and save for their wedding plans in

Thailand and once they were married she would possibly apply to medical school.

3) Emotional tone expressed as solid self-assuredness and poised self-confidence. Participant #1 revealed in question 13 that she attended the University of Victoria on scholarship and even though her younger brother had died in her senior year at high school, she was still able to maintain her academic requirements for the future university funding. Moreover, Participant #1 ranked all 3 domains very high in the extremely important category which may have suggested a strong sense of self-confidence about her life and future plans for her adulthood.

4) Identification with significant others changes from idealization to realistic self-interested appraisal. It is important to note that both of Participant #1's parents were trained individually as a doctor and as a nurse in medicine. Her father practiced as a general practitioner and her mother was a nurse at a hospital. Therefore, Participant #1 had a very realistic perspective of the training and commitments involved in both of her parents' careers. Yet, Participant #1 was also aware that when her mother stopped nursing to be a homemaker and primary caretaker of herself and her brother that it had a negative impact on her mother's self-esteem. For example in question #34, Participant #1 states that:

"My mother had no focus outside of being a wife/mother and caretaker and she thrived on being needed; if she had been busier may-be she would have been less depressed.

Myself: I will be busy working and involved in things inside and outside the home and marriage (34)."

Thus, it is evident that Participant #1 has a realistic awareness of her mother's loss of self-identity and the impact her mother's career changes had upon her mother's sense of self-purpose. Participant #1 verbally describes how she will remain connected to more roles in her personal life so her sense of purpose as an adult does not rely on any one specific resource.

5) Projecting one's personal future by demonstrating commitment and producing a reasonable 5 year plan. Participant #1's plans for her future in adulthood definitely involved both personal and professional commitments which were well thought out and in the midst of being initiated. However she did not specifically state that she had a 5 year plan. It is somewhat implied that her plans to move, re-locate to another city with her fiancé to work and save for a wedding, then travel to Thailand to marry, and likely return to Canada to apply to medical school may likely take 5 years to complete. Therefore, it may be more accurate to say that Participant #1's future plans definitely involve commitment and resemble a five year planning process.

6) Resistance to being swayed involving 3 aspects:

a) acknowledgement of the possibility of change; b) linkage of possible change to the individual's abilities and societal opportunities; and c) reluctance to change except under fairly pressing circumstances.

Participant #1 had definite plans for her future. However, in questions 18, 19, 22 and 24 under the domain of vocational plans she responded in a pattern similar to the structure of the sixth criteria of commitment. For example she states:

“Medicine requires long hours and stress; politics with government with working hours and bad conditions;

English is an enjoyable subject without many jobs (18);”

and she acknowledges that she has thought of other programs to study in her response to question 19:

“Editing/publishing: writing skills. Journalism. Research are other things I’ve considered.”

Question 22 asks: What influenced your decision here? She responds:

“Ever since I was young I enjoyed modern English novels.”

Question 24 asks: How willing do you think you’d be to change your plans if something better came along?

She responds: “No.”

Commitment Score: 5.5 out of 6

Total Score: 9 out of 10 – Participant #1 appears to have a score strongly indicating a solid consolidation of an overall self-identity. Her mother’s death and counseling received as a result of the death seems to have had a positive influence over Participant #1’s choices. Participant #1 uses her mother’s choices as an example of things she might not want to do in her adult roles. For example, Participant #1 has indicated she learned from her mother’s experience how important it is to maintain her own

independence in adulthood. Finally, Participant #1 ranked question #91 as her personal history domain as having the most impact over her self-identity after her mother's death. This finding will be further examined in our discussion of the results.

### Participant #2:

#### Part 1: Exploration:

1) Knowledge and thoughtfulness about ideas that are realistic. Participant #2 was 20 at the time of the ISI interview, and she had completed her second year of her degree in Humanities. It had been exactly two years since the death of her mother. She was still living at home and she attended university directly after high school. She was also the youngest participant in the study. Participant #2 expressed herself in a straightforward manner and she was positive and motivated with her vocational plans to someday become a teacher. Yet, Participant #2 did appear to be a little naive in her life experiences. For example in question 19, she was asked if she had thought about any other program besides teaching and she said no. Her response lacked any qualifying remarks to understand why she had not engaged in more exploration of other alternatives to the profession of teaching.

2) Activity directed toward self-initiated, in-depth gathering of information and researching by reading books or meeting and speaking with people about a specific subject. Participant #2 indicated some self-initiated

behaviour in her vocational plans in questions 16, 17, 18, and 19. She states:

When did you first become interested in teaching?

“Probably grade nine or ten was when I became first interested in teaching (16).”

What do you find attractive about this field?

“Its’ rewarding and a good feeling seeing people go off into the world and know you were a part of that; I also had a good relationship with my teachers (17).”

What drawbacks do you see about the field?

“Large classes and no jobs teaching. Possibly traveling for work (18).”

Since you’ve been at college, have you thought about any other program besides teaching?

“No (19);” (see Appendix A for all ISI questions).

Thus far in her vocational plans, Participant #2 seems to be inspired about her future career plans by speaking with her former teachers.

3) Considering alternative potential identity elements and demonstrating through experimentation that attention to alternatives and the consequences of them have been weighed. Participant #2 did not consider any alternatives at all in her vocational identity as indicated in question 19. She states:

Since you’ve been at college, have you thought about any other program besides teaching?

“No (19).”

How willing do you think you’d be to change your plans?

“Not very (24).”

What might cause you to make such a change?

“Anything family related like needing to move away; or anything medical that would make me drop everything to change my mind... like a crisis or emergency or something (25).”

Although Participant #2's passion for teaching appears authentic, she discloses nothing to indicate she has considered alternatives or consequences of any of her vocational choices.

4) Desire to make an early decision about the best-fitting vocational, ideological, and interpersonal alternatives with which to begin adulthood. It appears that Participant #2 made a few important decisions at a very early age. As previously stated, Participant #2 indicated in her response to question 16 that she had decided to become a teacher around grade nine or ten. However, later on in the domain of marriage and the role of spouse in part of her response to questions 31 and 34, Participant #2 indicates that she would currently prefer to marry someone who is in the same educational field as herself and she would not be a stay-at-home mom.

What kind of person would you want to marry?

“Someone that's educated and hopefully in the same field as I'm in; someone who's supportive; not expect me to be a stay-at-home mom (31).”

How would you compare your ideas about marriage with those of your (mother)?

“I think my mom married so that she'd please her family; and because she thought it was necessary and she wanted to have kids and thought that was the right way to go about life; and I don't feel that way at all. I'm the opposite of my mom (34).”

Exploration Score: 2 out of 4

## Part 2: Commitment

1) Knowledge expressed articulately demonstrating clarity and experience of what they want to do with their life. Participant #2 had many plans for her future adult roles and her attitude toward answering the questions 19 and 24 reflected a definite commitment in her vocational choice.

Since you've been at college, have you thought about any other program besides teaching?

"No (19)."

How willing do you think you'd be to change your plans?

"Not very (24)."

2) Activity directed toward implementing a chosen identity path by demonstrating external indicators of putting their internal thoughts into action. Obviously Participant #2 had put her academic plans into action by attending university as she stated above in criteria two of her exploration that she had decided to become a teacher around grade nine or ten.

However she was actually in the Faculty of Humanities and not the Faculty of Education. Participant #2 still had to officially apply to the Faculty of Education; and, since she had not declared a level she would like to teach at she still had some internal thoughts to decide upon and put into action.

3) Emotional tone expressed as solid self-assuredness and poised self-confidence. Participant #2 spoke with confidence in her interview with all questions and answers with both tools. Therefore, as the researcher it was

a challenge for me to interpret any insecurity in her vocal tone or body language. Yet, Participant #2's vocational plans were only partially in process as she had not officially been accepted into the Faculty of Education's teaching program. Moreover, my impression of her exploration process was that it was possibly too narrow and this could possibly impact her commitment choices as well.

4) Identification with significant others changes from idealization to realistic self-interested appraisal. Participant #2 was confident in her ability to differentiate with the adult role models involved with her and their personal choices in her own development process. Earlier Participant #2 explained how she would not be a stay-at-home mother like her own mother chose to do. In addition, in questions 23 and 24 Participant #2 stated:

Most parents have plans for their children, things they'd like to see them go into, things they'd to see them do. Did your folks have any plans like that for you?

"No. Parents encouraged us to go off and do our own thing (23)."

Do you think your parents may have had a preference for one field over another, although they would never have tried to pressure you about it?

"Parents wanted us to go to university but no they never pressured us about it.

Parents are supportive; dad definitely; and mom only sort of knew about plans. Both always supportive and happy for me (24)."

5) Projecting one's personal future by demonstrating commitment and producing a reasonable 5 year plan. Participant #2 did not have a five year

plan but maintained committed to her ideas regarding her future career as a teacher. Also, in question 91 each participant was asked to rank each of the four domains based on what they felt was the most impactful upon their identity since their mother's death. This participant indicated that her vocational plans were the most impacted by her mother's death. This finding will be further examined in the discussion of results.

6) Resistance to being swayed involving 3 aspects: a) acknowledgement of the possibility of change; b) linkage of possible change to the individual's abilities and societal opportunities; and c) reluctance to change except under fairly pressing circumstances.

When did you first become interested in teaching?

"Probably grade nine or ten was when I became first interested in teaching (16)."

What do you find attractive about this field?

"It's rewarding and a good feeling seeing people go off into the world and know you were a part of that; I also had a good relationship with my teachers (17)."

What drawbacks do you see about the field?

"Large classes and no jobs teaching. Possibly traveling for work (18)."

Since you've been at college, have you thought about any other program besides teaching?

"No (19)."

How willing do you think you'd be to change your plans?

"Not very (24)."

What might cause you to make such a change?

“Anything family related like needing to move away; or anything medical that would make me drop everything to change my mind. like a crisis or emergency or something (25).”

Commitment Score: 4 out of 6

Total Score: 6 out of 10 – Participant #2's exploration was limited and this may have compromised the consolidation of her self-identity. In her fifth criteria for commitment, I noted that Participant #2 had indicated that in question 91 she felt her mother's death had the most impact over her vocational choices. There may be a relationship between these two areas but it was only my intention to use the ISI to enquire about this issue rather than process it at all with any of the participants in my study

### Participant #3:

Part 1: Exploration

1) Knowledge and thoughtfulness about ideas that are realistic. Participant #3 was 22 at the time of the ISI interview, and she had graduated with her first degree and she was employed. It had been approximately five years since the death of her mother so this participant answered most of the questions with very detailed, introspective, and mature responses. To clarify, Participant #3 used language in her responses which was similar to Adams' and Gullota's (1989) earlier description of the concept of a functional ego identity in their theory of female personality development (see page six). In spite of her mother's death, Participant #3 appeared to be a young woman who really took time to know herself and continued to

grow into an independent and self-integrated individual with a very simple yet realistic attitude. For example, in question fourteen in the domain of vocation her response was:

Are you attending school now?

“In grade twelve my mother died so when I went to UVIC I was confused in my first and second year and I explored a bunch of different paths and got really nervous and it didn’t feel right...then I took one class in geography which lead to graduating at UVIC April 2003 with a BSc in geography (14).”

2) Activity directed toward implementing a chosen identity path by demonstrating external indicators of putting their internal thoughts into action (see Appendix A for all ISI questions).

When did you first become interested in: geography?

“I started off in English and Acting courses and I switched from Humanities to Science in my second year of university (16).”

What influenced your decision here?

“I took one geography class and I felt really drawn to the teacher and I was really impressed by him and decided that would be something I was interested in doing; and I also had this sense of urgency to make a decision (22).”

3) Considering alternative potential identity elements and demonstrating through experimentation that attention to alternatives and the consequences of them have been weighed.

What do you find attractive about this field?

“I think I developed an environmental awareness and a desire...I became passionate about environmental education...all the things you learn in school...you can actually apply this to your life...not cocktail knowledge...I can make a difference like by having a compost (17).”

What drawbacks do you see about this field?

"I think it's really frustrating because I learn a lot about how we are harming the environment and a lot of people don't care or think change is useless...I fluctuate between being really driven and really depressed about it (18)."

Most parents have plans for their children, things they'd like to see them go into, things they'd like to see them do. Did your folks have any plans like that for you?

"My father always wanted me to be a lawyer and I was adamant not to be; my mom was more general she always wanted me to be doing what I was doing as long as I was enjoying it; she said follow your heart (23)."

4) Desire to make an early decision about the best-fitting vocational, ideological, and interpersonal alternatives with which to begin adulthood. Participant #3 chose geography late in the second year of her degree after she experimented with other subjects. Participant #3 had a few significant areas of obvious challenges where she was successful with her efforts in choosing elements within her own self-development that best suited her. As Participant #3 described her struggle through these choices one specific domain distinctly related to her reaction to her mother's death. For example, in the domain of religious beliefs in questions 58, 69, 71-76, 78, and 81 she states:

I'd like to find out something about your ideas in the area of religion...

"I guess I generally consider myself to be agnostic: I'm a fence sitter I don't really know what to believe. I've done a little bit of exploring, quite a bit actually since my mom passed away & I really don't like organized religion actually. I find it really imposing & that the church or organization may-be is trying to convert you into

something that they want you to be and not, trying to nurture your own spirituality. I found most of my religious beliefs have come from interesting books I've read that triggered some sort of thought in me or made me question something or think about it (58)."

Did you ever attend religious services with any frequency?

"Yes for about 1 year in a Pentecostal youth group (69)."

Was there ever a time when you came to question, to doubt, or perhaps to change your religious beliefs?

"Absolutely, probably well a couple times I guess I fluctuated. When I start seeking for specific answers to my beliefs and my faith that's when I lose faith...that's happened a couple of times...right around when I stopped going to youth group and again after my mom passed away...in watching my dad I guess go through all sorts of religious exploration and I found myself being really critical of him in doing that...I think...I felt as though I was outside of that and watching him go through strange grief and I probably didn't realize it within myself how much uhm how hurt I was and how my own spirituality was very much in question...(71)."

(If yes:) What types of things did you question or change?

"Uhm...I definitely questioned the power of prayer and I guess like the fairness of life and death and I guess like the purpose of really questioning why I'm here and what the purpose of that is...what I'm supposed to discover or learn while I'm here (72)."

What started you thinking about these questions?

"Mom's death (73)."

How old were you at the time? "17" (74).

**How serious were these questions for you?**

"Very (75)."

Do you feel that you've resolved these questions for yourself, or are you still working on them?

"No...I'm still working on them...less urgent I think than it used to feel...I'm content in you can't have a specific answer (76)."

(If not resolved:) How are you going about trying to answer these questions?

“Meditation, meeting with similar people seeking self- exploration and grief...(78).”

Are there any important differences between your beliefs and those of your parents?

“Uhm I guess so I think the Buddhist influence in my life is different. Uhm I don't think they had that at all...they grew up in Christian families and either didn't want to or were not encouraged to think outside that realm...whereas for me there were a lot more options available and I think it's less conforming and allows me to have my own set of beliefs based on self-exploration...(81).”

Exploration Score: 3.5 out of 4

Part 2: Commitment:

1) Knowledge expressed articulately demonstrating clarity and experience of what they want to do with their life. Participant #3 had special plans in mind for her immediate future that involved traveling with her common-law partner before she acted on any other planned future commitments. For example, in question 27, 57, 89, and 90 participants were asked to rank the domains of vocation, marriage and the role of spouse, and religion on a scale of one to seven where “7” means extremely important in their life. Since Participant #3 had both religious and agnostic beliefs she answered both ranking questions 89 and 90 in response to the domain of religion.

Question 27 in the domain of marriage and the role of spouse was ranked with a “6” and the rest of her responses were ranked with a “3”. Participant #3 explained that she had only been with her partner for the last six months so she was focused on getting to know him. Therefore, she ranked the domain of marriage and the role of spouse with a “6” because

her main demonstration of her future commitment was with her current common-law spouse with the hope for a permanent commitment in marriage after traveling together.

2) Activity directed toward implementing a chosen identity path by demonstrating external indicators of putting their internal thoughts into action. Participant #3 intended to marry her partner however she needed time to finalize her decision of her promise to a lifelong commitment with him. In her responses to questions 29, 30-34, 38, 39 and 40 she elaborates on her perspective of choosing a marital partner:

When do you think would be a good time to marry?

"I still think I'd like to have a couple of years uhm...just to make sure that I'm not making the wrong decision (29)."

Why then?

"I just don't feel it's something I need to rush if I'm going to be with that person for the rest of my life; and, marriage is a legal thing I guess but there's something really beautiful about it; I like the traditional romance about it I guess; but, at the same time I'm really happy how I am...so I don't feel there's any rush (30)."

What kind of a person would you want to marry?

"Someone who's really supportive of things I guess that I want to do and doesn't try to change me; somebody that: the two of us compliment each other and bring out different qualities that make each person stronger. I guess a relationship where you want to be with the other person but you don't need to be (31)."

How do you picture what marriage might be like for you?

"I think marriage would be similar to how we are right now except that other people would view us differently...(32)."

What do you see as your role as a wife/partner?

"I think to support the other person as much as possible and not lose track of myself and my wants...as a nurturer (33)."

How would you compare your ideas about marriage with those of your mother?

"Hmm, I think my mother was a lot more traditional than I will be...in my mind looking back it looks like she gave up a lot things that she wanted to do when she became married by dropping out of school and becoming like a housewife while my dad pursued his education and career...uhm she seemed happy to do so but I don't think I would be as happy in the same situation (34)."

Has your decision about marrying come easily to you, or has it been a difficult decision to make?

"Pretty easily because I met the right person & it feels right. I don't have any fears about it (38)."

Why do you think it has?

"Met the right person (39)."

Who may have been a factor in your decision?

"Definitely ah..my friends and the way my boyfriend interacts with my family now since my dad is remarried and I have 6 step-brothers and sisters...just the way he interacts with my family and the kids...I feel like he unifies a situation that's a little bit odd (40)".

Therefore, Participant #3 has indicated that she is fairly certain about her future marital identity path but she simply needs more time.

3) Emotional tone expressed as solid self-assuredness and poised self-confidence. Participant #3 spoke clearly, confidently, and humbly about her past exploration and future commitments.

4) Identification with significant others changes from idealization to realistic self-interested appraisal. In questions 10, 11, and 34, Participant #3's statements reveal how she is different from her mother:

And your mother, what was her educational background?

“Did 3 years university in education program but she dropped out when she had kids (10).”

And was she employed outside the home?

“Part-time at a bakery (11).”

How would you compare your ideas about marriage with those of your mother?

“Hmm, I think my mother was a lot more traditional than I will be...in my mind looking back it looks like she gave up a lot things that she wanted to do when she became married by dropping out of school and becoming like a housewife while my dad pursued his education and career...uhm she seemed happy to do so but I don't think I would be as happy in the same situation (34).”

Therefore, Participant 3 could be considered realistic specifically in her response to question 34 as she points out that she probably would not have been happy in the same style of marriage as her mother's role within the marriage would not be enough to satisfy her own needs.

5) Projecting one's personal future by demonstrating commitment & producing a reasonable 5 year plan. Participant #3 discusses her future plans in the domains of vocation and marriage and the role of spouse in questions 24c,d,e, (see examples on page 53) and 29-32 (see examples on page 50); yet, she does not specifically state that it is a five year plan.

6) Resistance to being swayed involving 3 aspects: a) acknowledgement of the possibility of change; b) linkage of possible change to the individual's abilities and societal opportunities; and c) reluctance to change except under fairly pressing circumstances. In the following

transcript quotations from the domain of vocational plans, Participant #3  
almost replicates the pattern proposed in this criteria of commitment.

Since you have been at college, have you thought  
about any other program besides sciences?

“No (19a).”

Do you think your parents may have had a preference for one field  
over another, although they would never have tried to pressure you  
about it?

“Law school was pressured but in a positive way (24a).”

How do your parents feel about your plans to go into a graduate  
program?

“My Dad is okay with it and he’s really proud of me for graduating  
and pursuing something and sticking with that (24b).”

How willing do you think you’d be to change your plans from a  
graduate program, if something better came along?

“...I’m pretty open to just about anything I also think because I just  
graduated I’m feeling kind of thrust “out there” right now and  
anything that looks interesting and exciting I’d be drawn to at this  
point. The masters is an idea but I’m flexible (24c).”

What do you mean by better?

“Uhm I’m think I’d probably want to do something more exciting...  
like acting again which is what I originally wanted to do but I used to  
put pressure on myself before that I had to be “successful”... (24d).”

What might you change to?

“Acting (24e);” (see Appendix A for all ISI questions).

What might cause you to make such a change?

“Uhm probably just getting really restless in what I’m doing or may-  
be a new surge of confidence in my abilities to do something  
different; it’s something I’ve always wanted to pursue but it was  
intimidating (25).”

How likely do you think it is that you will make some change?

“Not to likely to change uhm partially but not completely (26).”

On a 7-point scale, how important do you see your vocation as being to you in your life, where 7 means “extremely important” and 1 means “not at all important”?

“Three (27).”

In short, Participant #3 has a strong pattern of commitment.

Commitment Score: 5.5 out of 6

Total Score: 9 out of 10 – Participant #3 had a very strong score in both part 1 and part 2 of the ISI. Her self-exploration process was self-initiated, in-depth, authentic, and she had considered alternatives in her career, relationships, and spiritual roles in her self-identity. Participant #3 appreciated the consequences of her previous choices in all of these areas of her adult life as well. Her commitment pattern was both narrowed and adaptable when necessary. Her response to question 91 was that her mother’s death was the most impactful over the domain of marriage and the role of spouse. Further comments about Participant 3’s response to question 91 will be made in the discussion of the results.

#### Participant #4:

Part 1: Exploration:

1) Knowledge and thoughtfulness about ideas that are realistic.

Participant #4 was 23 at the time of ISI interview, and she was completing her final year of an undergraduate degree. It had been over five years since the death of her mother, so this added some depth to her

experience and to her responses to the questions. Participant #4 had a straightforward and logical approach to her thought processes and self-expression. For example, in the domain of religious beliefs in questions 58, 72, and 82 Participant 4 demonstrates her self-exploration with the topic of religion and responds in a realistic way to both questions. She states:

“I’d like to find out something about your ideas in the area of religion...”

“...well...is there a God, I don’t know I don’t even ask myself that... there has to be a respect outside of myself and above my existence ...if that’s God I guess, I really don’t like organized religion...I see it as a hindrance in a lot of ways...I’m sure there’s a greater spiritual power uhm I just kind of hesitate as my thinking about it can change...(58);” (see Appendix A for all ISI questions).

What types of things did you question or change?

“I never really had that strong of beliefs but I specifically came to resent more and more the Christian beliefs with age...for my mom’s funeral we didn’t plan anything personal...we had a Christian service with hymns and songs but it really ticked me off because it didn’t speak to me...I didn’t like it at all...there was a memorial service in a big church but the actual funeral which was just my immediate family was in a funeral home...(72).”

At this time how well worked out do you think your ideas on religion are?

“Oh they are fine now...there may be things that will come up later that may-be I’ll challenge or think about things more but they are fine for now (82).”

2) Activity directed toward self-initiated, in-depth gathering of information & researching by reading books or meeting and speaking with people about a specific subject. Participant #4 was very articulate and well informed

specifically about her vocational choices. She attended the University of Victoria on a scholarship straight from high school and did two years in biology in preparation for medical school. Participant #4 applied to university based on her own independent decisions. For example, in the domain of vocational plans questions 23 through 26 she states:

Most parents have plans for their children, things they'd like to see them go into, things they'd like to see them do. Did your folks have any plans like that for you?

"...not really anything specific; they encouraged us to do what we wanted but certainly they were both fans of post-secondary education (23)."

Do you think your parents may have had a preference for one field over another, although they would never have tried to pressure you about it?

"Not particularly, I don't think so (24)."

How do your parents feel about your plans to go into a healthcare profession?

"Good (24b)."

How willing do you think you'd be to change your plans from kinesiology, if something better came along?

"I'm willing if it's better but I have to admit that I'm a little impatient to get on with school at this point...want this degree done & I'm focused and not distracted (24c)."

What might cause you to make such a change?

"It would have to be pretty relevant and a good opportunity...possible but I'm a lot less swayed these days (25)."

How likely do you think it is that you will make some change?

"Not (26)."

3) Considering alternative potential identity elements and demonstrating through experimentation that attention to alternatives and the consequences of them have been weighed. Two years after her mother's death Participant #4 decided to take some time off from university and travel to Europe for eight months. Then she worked for another two years and when she had decided she was ready to complete her degree she returned to the University of Victoria to study kinesiology. Consequently she lost her scholarship funding but she stated in part of her response to question thirteen that:

What have you done about continued schooling, work, and marriage since high school?

"...mom would have wanted me to return to Uvic so 2002-'03 I returned and decided on kinesiology and got a p/t job at coffee shop (13)."

In addition, in question sixteen Participant #4 elaborates further about her vocational exploration process:

When did you first become interested in pre-medicine?

"Right from start: I went from biology to anatomy to kinesiology (16)."

What do you find attractive about this field?

"Kinesiology is more human and body oriented more than biology; not certain about medicine (M.D) anymore; possibly naturopathic medicine to become a N.D. (Naturopathic Doctor) (17)."

What drawbacks do you see about the field?

"Kinesiology is a wonderful program but a stepping stone degree cause you can't really do anything with it and continue with chiropractic, physiotherapy, or M.D. or N.D. (18)."

Since you have been at college, have you thought about any other program besides: kinesiology?

“Not really (19).”

What else have you considered?

“I thought of being a writer and interested in music but not seriously (19b).”

4) Desire to make an early decision about the best-fitting vocational, ideological, and interpersonal alternatives with which to begin adulthood. Participant #4 was very motivated in all areas of exploring her adulthood and making good decisions for herself as a result of that process. The domains selected for use in the ISI interview in my study all seemed to be relevant and important to Participant #4. She rated all three domains with a six or greater in their meaning and importance to her. She scored the vocational plans domain with the highest score of 6.5 as it was extremely important to her. Participant #4 appeared to be very enthusiastic and ambitious about what she wanted to accomplish in her future life. For example, in the domain of marriage and the role of spouse her responses to the questions revealed a natural unfolding of her choice of a spouse.

She states:

Are you currently in a romantic and/or committed relationship with someone?

“Yes; engaged (28).”

Describe: 1) heterosexual/ alternative lifestyle; and,  
2) married or common-law ?

“Heterosexual; common-law 3 years (28b).”

Do you plan to marry someday?

"Yes (28c)."

Why do you plan to marry?

"Found the right person (28d)."

When do you think would be a good time for you to marry?

"No rush to get legal formality in but may-be next 2 to 3 years (29)."

Why then?

"Meeting his parents for the first time this summer and we don't really have the money to get married; timing and plans need to be worked out (30)."

What kind of a person would you want to marry?

"Well I like that he's uhm.. "opposites attract"; he's different than me in a lot ways and it seems to balance...he's quite outgoing and has incredible amount of energy; he's not into post-secondary education which I respect and he's quite physical and in-the-moment and slows me down...we compliment each other well...(31)."

How do you picture what marriage might be like for you?

"...We'll be great encouragement and balance for each other in the long-term; ...fulfilling and comfortable and stable...(32)."

What do you see as your role as a (wife/partner)?

"Ah...be supportive and supported; ensuring we eat well is part of my role...(33)."

How would you compare your ideas about marriage with those of your (mother)?

"Uhm...I guess they're pretty similar, my parents were really happy together for 26-7 years...certainly each other's best friends I think; uhm ya my partner and I are best friends and we share responsibilities similar to my parents...(34)."

Exploration Score: 4 out of 4

Part 2: Commitment:

- 1) Knowledge expressed articulately demonstrating clarity and experience of what they want to do with their life. As previously outlined in various examples used in the exploration section of part 1, Participant #4 repetitively disclosed her plans and dreams for her future adult roles.
- 2) Activity directed toward implementing a chosen identity path by demonstrating external indicators of putting their internal thoughts into action. Participant #4 was actively completing her degree at the University of Victoria and living with her boyfriend on a common-law basis. Again this content was noted in part 1 therefore it is not necessary to re-quote this information (see pages 57-59 for answers to questions 16-19, 29, and 30 for reference). The most important aspect of the commitment variable in this section of the ISI is that an individual is choosing a direction for their commitments to develop within their identity building process and this direction is adaptable (Marcia et al., 1993, p.212).
- 3) Emotional tone expressed as solid self-assuredness and poised self-confidence. Participant #4 answered all of the questions in this instrument with positive certainty and communicated in both a descriptive and candid manner which made it easy for me to follow and later assess her process of identity formation.
- 4) Identification with significant others changes from idealization to realistic self-interested appraisal. Participant #4 expressed separateness

from her parents' ideas mainly in the domain of religion. For example in questions 59-62 and 72, Participant #4 states:

Do you have any religious preference?

"No preference but I have respect for Eastern philosophies but I wouldn't want to structure my beliefs around Western ones (59)."

How about your parents – do they have any religious preference?

"I guess..I suspect mostly because they were raised Christian (60)."

Were both of your parents reared Christian?

"My dad's background is Italian so may-be Catholic and my mom I'm sure would identify herself as Christian (61)."

How important would you say religion is to your parents?

"Not at all important to my dad and it wasn't hugely important to my mom...but it was definitely more important to my mom (62).

What types of things (in religion) did you question or change?

"I really question that it's a pre-set set of beliefs in ways that you should live...whether they are true or not I just don't like that somebody wouldn't ask those questions of themselves first instead of being told ;...it's male dominated...I tried to read the bible out of curiosity and the attitude that people are dominant over each other...to say the least it's not a sustainable way of thinking...just environmentally sustainable...trying to control things that we don't have control over...and personally sustainable I don't see how that outlook can work I never really had that strong of beliefs but I specifically came to resent more and more the Christian beliefs with age... uhm just with more reading and education...I really only see it as a reason people don't think for themselves (72)."

5) Projecting one's personal future by demonstrating commitment and producing a reasonable 5 year plan. In the first domain titled "personal history " in question 13, Participant #4 mentioned that part of her

motivation or inspiration for returning to university was to honour her deceased mother's wishes for her to complete her degree. Participant #4 states:

What have you done about continued schooling, work, and marriage since high school?

"Immediately went to Uvic and did 2 years in biology right after high school with scholarship plan; meant to take 1 year off and took 3 years off to work and travel and subsequently lost funding which allowed only 1 year off and mom would have wanted me to return so 2002-'03 I returned and decided on Kinesiology and a got a part-time job at a coffee shop (13)."

This act of returning to school partially to honour her mother's memory may reveal a connection to part of Participant #4's theme in her self-exploration process of how her mother's death affected a choice she made in her self-identity. In addition, Participant #4 revealed her plans for future commitments in the three other domains: vocational plans in questions 17 and 18; marriage and the role of spouse in questions 29, 50 and 51; and, religious beliefs in questions 82 and 84.

What do you find attractive about this field?

"Kinesiology is more human and body oriented more than biology; not certain about medicine (M.D) anymore; possibly naturopathic medicine to become a N.D. (Naturopathic Doctor) (17)."

What drawbacks do you see about the field?

"Kinesiology is a wonderful program but a stepping stone degree cause you can't really do anything with it and continue with chiropractic, physiotherapy, or M.D. or N.D. (18)."

When do you think would be a good time for you to marry?

"No rush to get legal formality in but may-be next 2 to 3 years (29)."

How do your ideas about marriage compare with his?

"Similar I guess...our only problems are financial...we are serious & mutual view of commitment and whose carrying the load will change and we're the same with traveling and kids...(50)."

As you think about the activities involved in marriage and your role as a (wife/partner), what would you say you anticipate to be most satisfying or rewarding for you?

"Uhm...just the impact we have on each other...like I'm more relaxed and actually being present in living and having fun; and I help him to have a plan; learning and teaching things together (51)."

At this time how well worked out do you think your ideas on religion are?

"Oh they are fine now...there may be things that will come up later that may-be I'll challenge or think about things more but they are fine for now (82)."

If they may change: In what direction do you think your beliefs might change?

"...probably more relaxed than now (84)."

Participant #4 does not mention a commitment to a five year plan yet she does indicate that she may legally marry in the next two to three years in her response to question #29. Also, Participant #4 refers to the fact that she helps her partner to have a "plan". Therefore she does believe in having some type of structure in her adult life in the form of a plan.

6) Resistance to being swayed involving 3 aspects: a) acknowledgement of the possibility of change; b) linkage of possible change to the individual's abilities and societal opportunities; and c) reluctance to change except under fairly pressing circumstances. In the domain of

vocational plans in questions 24c, 25, and 26, Participant #4 follows the pattern of commitment noted above in this criteria. For example, she states:

How willing do you think you'd be to change your plans from kinesiology, if something better came along?

"I'm willing if it's better but I have to admit that I'm a little impatient to get on with school at this point...want this degree done and I'm focused and not distracted (24c)."

What might cause you to make such a change?

"It would have to be pretty relevant and a good opportunity...possible but I'm a lot less swayed these days (25)."

How likely do you think it is that you will make some change?

"Not (26);" (see Appendix A for all ISI questions).

Commitment Score: 5.5 out of 6

Total: 9.5 out of 10 – Participant #4's score is the highest and possibly the strongest consolidation of an overall self-identity in the ISI portion of the study. She had an independent spirit that was self-initiated, in-depth, and authentic and I noticed it very distinctly in her attitude toward answering all of the questions of the ISI from her perspective of her reality. Participant #4's exploration and commitment process was thorough, personally reflective and expressive. She took time off from school to travel and consider alternatives toward her choices in adulthood and she had a comprehensive understanding of the consequences of her choices as well. In question 91 of the ISI, she rated the domain of marriage and the role of spouse as the most impacted by her mother's death. I will suspend further comment about this choice until the discussion of the results.

Participant #5:

## Part 1: Exploration:

1) Knowledge and thoughtfulness about ideas that are realistic. Participant #5 was 22 at the time of the ISI interview, and she was in the final year of her undergraduate degree. It had been six years since her mother had died and she had gone straight from high school to university into the kinesiology program. Participant #5 shared that she had explored a few options in her career search. She had also completed an eight month school term in Australia as part of the co-op program available in kinesiology. All of her ideas were consistent with her strength in the sciences. This participant was authentic, realistic and somewhat shy.

2) Activity directed toward self-initiated, in-depth gathering of information & researching by reading books or meeting and speaking with people about a specific subject. Since high school Participant #5 had always been strong in the sciences and both of her parents were medical doctors practicing medicine together in a small town community in general practice. Participant #5 was well supported with information and encouragement from both her parents in exploring her career choices. Yet, it is not completely clear how much of her career research was self-initiated. In the domain of vocational plans in question 16 she states:

When did you first become interested in sciences?

“At age 16/17 I was going to the gym and involved in sports a lot and at school I enjoyed courses in science; it was natural to continue as I didn’t put too much thought into what I would study at university (16);” (see Appendix A for all ISI questions).

3) Considering alternative potential identity elements and demonstrating through experimentation that attention to alternatives and the consequences of them have been weighed. Participant #5 had considered a career as a veterinarian prior to committing herself to the kinesiology program. In the domain of vocational plans in question 19 she states:

Since you have been at college, have you thought about any other program besides kinesiology?

"Yes. Veterinary medicine...I got in (to veterinary school) overseas and decided not to go (19);"

4) Desire to make an early decision about the best-fitting vocational, ideological, and interpersonal alternatives with which to begin adulthood. At first Participant #5 gives the impression she is making early decisions in her career plans as noted above in her responses to questions 16 and 19. However, in question 24b, 24c, 25, and 26 her pattern of career exploration changes slightly in her level of personal confidence about her choices. For example she states:

How willing do you think you'd be to change your plans from kinesiology, if something better came along?

"Oh quite willing...I'm a bit of a floater at the moment...(24b)."

What might you change to?

"I've been thinking of occupational therapy or a complete change is I really like the microbiology/bio-chemistry courses that I've taken (24c)."

What might cause you to make such a change?

"...I don't know...I have 6 months to decide if I'm going to apply to occupational therapy cause I have another year of kinesiology to go to finish my degree and the O.T. is a Masters degree (25)."

How likely do you think it is that you will make some change?

"Fairly likely to make some change... 50/50... a lot can change in a year... (26)."

Still, Participant #5 is trying to make the best-fitting vocational decision for herself even though she was anticipating another change in her exploration process. Quite possibly, Participant #5 is multi-talented and her strongest vocational desire is to be happy in her career as an adult. Therefore it appears Participant #5 will make a final decision when she has completed exploring her desires about where she is most likely to be happy and certain official deadlines pass in various academic programs regarding her application to do graduate work.

Exploration Score: 3.5 out of 4

Part 2: Commitment:

1) Knowledge expressed articulately demonstrating clarity and experience of what they want to do with their life. In the domain of marriage and the role of spouse Participant #5 has clear ideas about her future roles as a partner even though she was not currently in a relationship at the time of my study. For example in questions 29, 30, 33 and 34 she states:

When do you think would be a good time for you to marry?

"Uhm... age 28to 30 (29)."

Why then?

“Uhm...because you can play...travel around and do what I want to do and be selfish (30).”

What do you see as your role as a (wife/partner)?

“Uhm...being equal and working and job sharing...not doing all of the cooking (33).”

How would you compare your ideas about marriage with those of your (mother)?

“Different...they got married when they were young and met at 19 and I couldn't do that; too many fish in the sea to choose from; mom was happy at 19...mom was traditional in staying with 1 person all her life and I'm more modern...(34).”

2) Activity directed toward implementing a chosen identity path by demonstrating external indicators of putting their internal thoughts into action. Participant #5 was attending university and completing her last year of her Bachelor of Science degree with a major in kinesiology. Nevertheless, in the domain of vocational plans in question number 18 Participant #5 lists the drawbacks of the field of kinesiology. She states:

What drawbacks do you see about the field?

“Uhm...for me the field is not focused on preventative side...(18).”

and, if we also look at the domain of religious beliefs in question 72, she states:

What types of things did you question or change (about your religious beliefs)?

“Ya...the role of humans...with Taoism everything is important...man's ambition and drive to find things out and how to let things be were discussed...*it came about when I was talking about what I wanted to do in school and what I enjoyed doing and looking for a career and belief system that matched up (72).*”

Even though Participant #5 was actively involved in committing herself to a professional career in the sciences, it is apparent from the two quotes above that she was struggling with her commitment to some of the beliefs involved in the scientific paradigm. In her spiritual exploration process, Participant #5 discovered that she had spiritual beliefs that were potentially in conflict with her scientific theories regarding the dilemma of whether helping should be about prevention or intervention.

3) Emotional tone expressed as solid self-assuredness and poised self-confidence. Participant #5 was very clear, honest and succinct at describing where she believed she was at in her self-initiated, in-depth, and reflective process of consolidating her own identity. For example, in the domain of religious beliefs in question 82, 83, and 84 Participant #5 states:

At this time, how well worked out do you think your ideas on religion are?

“Rough and developing (82).”

Do you think your ideas on religion are likely to remain stable, or do you believe they may very well change in the future?

“Developing (83).”

(If they may change:) In what direction do you think your beliefs might change?

“More clear (84).”

4) Identification with significant others changes from idealization to realistic self-interested appraisal. Participant #5 had a sense of her own

independence about developing her ideas throughout the interview. For example, in the domain of vocational plans in question number 24 she states:

Do you think your parents may have had a preference for one field over another, although they would never have tried to pressure you about it?

"I don't know... Not any specific field that I know of... my parents told me that I did not have to do what they did when I chose my program at Uvic; in high school I told my mom I liked veterinary medicine and she encouraged me to apply and my dad supported me when I chose not to go (24)."

5) Projecting one's personal future by demonstrating commitment and producing a reasonable 5 year plan. Participant #5 did not have a five year plan. Still, she was acting on her commitments by completing her degree in kinesiology and finalizing her plans and decisions for the possibility of graduate work. As stated earlier, Participant #5 indicated a desire to marry but was single at the time of the study. Yet, she maintained a very clear vision of a balanced partnership based on equality (see page 67 for example in question 33).

6) Resistance to being swayed involving 3 aspects: a) acknowledgement of the possibility of change; b) linkage of possible change to the individual's abilities and societal opportunities; and c) reluctance to change except under fairly pressing circumstances. Participant #5 had a variety of options to choose from in her graduate work. She indicated that there was a fifty percent chance of her changing her future professional

plans after she completed the Bachelor of Science program. For example, she discusses many of her options that she is still considering:

How willing do you think you'd be to change your plans from kinesiology?

"Oh quite willing...I'm a bit of a floater at the moment...(24b)."

What might you change to?

"I don't know...kinesiology has a lot of good things to do in the field that are important and I can go into rehabilitation medicine or take a leisure/recreation approach or get into a sciences oriented path...ya it's a good job and important for people...(24c)."

"I've been thinking of occupational therapy or a complete change is I really like the microbiology/bio-chemistry courses that I've taken (24c)."

What might cause you to make such a change?

"...I don't know...I have 6 months to decide if I'm going to apply to occupational therapy cause I have another year of kinesiology to go to finish my degree and the O.T. is a Masters degree (25)."

How likely do you think it is that you will make some change?

"Fairly likely to make some change...50/50...a lot can change in a year (26);" (see Appendix A for all ISI questions).

In short, Participant #5 does not know if she will change her career path or not. Her academic goals are multiple and are dependent on several unknown variables. Therefore, it is important that she has a direction for her commitments to follow but it is not relevant which professional program she chooses at the end of her studies of her undergraduate degree.

Commitment Score: 5 out of 6

Total score: 8.5 out of 10 – Participant #5 had a strong overall consolidation of self-identity. However, she was struggling to make a final decision on a career path. She was definitely trying to narrow her direction and commit to a professional program but her emotional tone lacked passion and excitement about one profession over another. Her response to question 91, was that her mother's death had the most impact on the domain of marriage and the role of spouse. The significance of this impact will be reviewed in the discussion of the results.

#### Results of the GAMSII:

Similar to the administering of the ISI, I assisted the research participants by reading each question in Section E of the GAMSII out loud and writing out their comments on the form myself. As stated earlier, the first "R" process is: "Recognize the loss" (see p.24 for list of six "R" processes). All of the participants in the study had a very clear intellectual understanding of the death and how it occurred. Four mothers died of four different forms of terminal cancer and the fifth mother was a suicide resulting from an overdose of various pharmaceuticals. Since all of the participants understood and acknowledged their mother's death they all advanced through the first of the six R's and the avoidance phase of grief and mourning (Rando, 1993).

The first question of the GAMSII (E-1), draws on the way the mourner's life has been altered and gives clues to the extent of secondary

losses: "Please describe what has happened to you in the time since your mother died. For example, what changes (either gains or losses; internal or external; physical or social; spiritual, occupational or financial), if any, have occurred to you, in you, and in your life since your mother's death?" (Rando, 1993, p. 675). This question examines how far the participants have progressed with the second "R" process: "React to the separation" in the second phase of grief and mourning which is the confrontation phase (Rando, 1993). The effects of secondary losses experienced and articulated by the participants usually involved a struggle of learning to live without their mother as a primary resource of their self-esteem. Specifically, there were three common themes that all five participants identified in common in the second "R" process.

First, all of the women identified their mother's death as the equivalent to losing both their best friend and role model. However, three of the women stated this response in question E-1 of 4 in the GAMSII. They all used the same phrase: "My mom was my best friend, role model, mentor...(Participant #2,3,4) she knew me better than anybody...I looked up to her...(Participant #2) she was the one I checked-in with about making the right choices..." (Participant #3), with very slight variations in sentence structure. One woman mentioned this theme in question E-2 part e. Question two, part e, asks: "What is the current impact, if any, of grief and mourning on your ability to function normally (physically; socially; spiritually; occupationally; or financially)?". The participant responded that:

“socially: I have less energy and motivation to do things with people; I feel less secure and confident to go out and socialize; without my mom’s support there’s no one to support my self-esteem and I’m more socially withdrawn; I miss doing things with her and going to concerts, shopping, out for lunch, visiting, talking on the telephone; I miss the whole relationship” (Participant #1). And one woman related this theme in part of her response to question E-4. Question four asks: “What if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss?”. Part of her response was: “I learned how important my mom was in my life;...My mom was definitely my idol as a person...she was meant to be a doctor and she really cared for people and she took good care of me...I want to be just like her” (Participant #5).

The second common theme was that all five women learned from their experience of their mother’s death how important self-care is in their own adulthood. Four of the women mentioned this in their response to question E-1 with additional comments individually in question E-2b, d, e, and E-4. Again question E-1 is: “Please describe what has happened to you in the time since your mother died. For example, what changes (either gains or losses; internal or external; physical or social; spiritual, occupational or financial), if any, have occurred to you, in you, and in your life since your mother’s death?”; and question E-2b asks: “Do you feel changed by this death? Part b: In what way are you the same as before? Part d: Do you feel, think, or act differently than before? If so, how? Part e:

What is the current impact, if any, of grief and mourning on your ability to function normally (physically; socially; spiritually; occupationally; or financially)?". Four of the women said: (1) "I needed to nurture myself and being healthy has even been re-enforced...like eating habits and exercise" (Participant #3); (2) "Well certainly it's become important to me to take care of myself on a lot of levels...on a day-to-day basis like exercise and eating right...stress specifically...in the last two years I was susceptible to insomnia and a racing heart and it was hard for me to relax so I took a meditation course" (Participant #4); (3) "I take anti-depressants and I know where my boundaries are with sadness and depression; I take care of myself and set boundaries with other people; my dad and I actually go rowing together"(Participant #2); (4) "I got into running and going to the gym and it was really helpful with grieving and stress"(Participant #5). One woman mentioned her self-care only in question E-4. Question four asks: "What if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss?". (5) "The number one thing I've learned is to take care of myself because that's something my mother did not do at all" (Participant #1). All of the participants recalled having mothers who lead extremely busy lifestyles who neglected their own well-being by setting other people's needs as a greater priority than their own individual needs.

The third common theme was how the death created an instant independent-adult status in their self-identity. Two women mentioned this in both question E-1 and E-2a, and, E-1 and E-2e. Again question E-1 is:

“Please describe what has happened to you in the time since your mother died. For example, what changes (either gains or losses; internal or external; physical or social; spiritual, occupational or financial), if any, have occurred to you, in you, and in your life since your mother’s death?”; and question E-2 is: Do you feel changed by this death?; and E-2a is: “If so in what ways are you different (specify what context signifies it)?”; and E-2e is: “What is the current impact, if any, of grief and mourning on your ability to function normally (physically, socially, spiritually, occupationally, or financially)?”. The first of the two women (E-1 & E- 2a) said:

E-1: “Her death has changed me and forced me to grow up quite early in my life which annoys me but I think from what I’ve learned, I can prepare myself now. I think I have something to offer other people who might go through this and I know how to support them. I’ve learned that I’m very naïve to believe that you know you grow up as a kid thinking your parents are always going to be there for you...being 19 when she died I still needed to be parented;...Like I said, I’ve grown up a lot faster and I think at the same time that sucks that I can’t be a goofy teenager...that I’ve gotten over this hurdle in my life so I think things might be a little bit easier cause of this experience...I feel like things will may-be get better from here...I think I can kind of look at the world in a different way now and think that I’m more of an adult and I can be myself and I can take care of myself...I think I’m a lot stronger now. I think before I was such a momma’s girl that you know...my mom and I would be quite a pair just bawling and emotional. Now I feel I’ve got more of an emotional grasp on myself and try and hold myself together...”  
(Participant #2).

2a: “Uhm I think I’ve become more independent and I’ve grown up and I had a nice sort of slap in the face to make me realize what life can be like and what it can throw at you and I think at the same time that sounds negative, I think it’s a good thing for me because like I said things can only get better from here sort of thing...”  
(Participant #2).

Similarly the second woman (E-1 and E-2e) said:

E-1: "I wanted to be independent and I wanted to feel as though I didn't need parenting anymore. I felt like my dad was not a strong parenting figure in my life so once my mom passed away I kind of decided that I didn't need it anymore...that if I couldn't get it from her then I didn't need it. Mentally I just became really goal-oriented and I didn't want to have to rely on anyone I think. I just feel like I grew up really fast all of a sudden. I forced or maturity was forced on me whether it was the experience itself or a lot of pressure within myself to do so. Emotionally I graduated to a higher level so everything else had to catch up. My own therapy for myself was to prove that I could be independent..."(Participant #3).

E-2e: Spiritually and socially: "In some ways, I am lucky to have experienced a death at a young age because the person I've become is better; I've probably learned a lot of things that probably some people don't learn until they are older...uhm I guess not to attach too much dependency on other people. Become self-reliant..." (Participant #3).

One woman spoke about this theme in both question E-1 and E-4. Again question E-1 is: "Please describe what has happened to you in the time since your mother died. For example, what changes (either gains or losses; internal or external; physical or social; spiritual, occupational or financial), if any, have occurred to you, in you, and in your life since your mother's death?"; and question E-4 asks: "What if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss?".

E-1: "After she died...I grew up in a matter of weeks. I had a different outlook. I guess as a teenager I lost a little confidence and feeling a little bit lost when I had a problem I didn't know who to ask so I didn't quite find it the same. I just sort of floated around. I lost interest in my friends because they were not going through what I was going through. I ended up doing all the cooking and grocery shopping for my dad and he was not very helpful. My mom organized everything and he didn't even realize it until after like he didn't know how to use a washing machine or a dryer...he was absolutely clueless and she did everything for him and worked. I

gained a real appreciation for who made my lunch and through my dad I learned how much she did for him and I had a different, more appreciation for our family..." (Participant #5).

E-4: "I learned how strong I was to get through this and how I am independent and I've been brought closer to my dad..." (Participant #5).

One woman discussed the instant independence theme in question E-2a only. Question E-2 is: Do you feel changed by this death?; and E-2a is: "If so in what ways are you different (specify what context signifies it)?".

E-2a: "I often think that I definitely would not be where I am now if she was alive and not in a good way, I think she would have been limiting for a lot of the things I'm glad that have happened to me. Uhm just experiences I've had. I went to Europe for eight months and I don't know if I would have gone if she was still alive but just how I was traveling two years after her death...she probably would not have approved of it. Since her death I've been permitted to be more risk-taking and exploring and spontaneous especially with relationships and sexuality...her death definitely made my personal growth easier in this area of my life. I've been allowed to live a modern lifestyle. Uhm my mom was an important person that I probably would have relied on for stress management and just being able to talk about stuff...just to have her as a support as an adult woman..." (Participant #4).

And finally, one woman related this theme in question E-4 only. Question four asks: "What if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss?"

E-4 "I have sort of discovered/developed coping resources that I probably wouldn't have had otherwise. At the time before her death, I was just sort of feeling like I was stepping out of the nest like it was my first year away but I was planning on coming home from university that summer before she died...but I was sort of in transition from getting my life together in a really positive way after my brother died and moving forward and it just kind of felt like a yanking out a bunch of security and support that I had been counting on both for my life in general and dealing with my brother's death and sort of moving forward and sort of becoming an adult with my own life...it's sort of strange because I sort of feel older and

wiser about some things compared to people my age but I also feel emotionally I may be not as secure and developed as most people might be who had two parents supporting them their whole life...I feel like a child sometimes and vulnerable..." (Participant #1).

In short, the first three common themes reviewed as part of the second "R" process inform us how all five women reacted to the separation from their mother. The first theme identified by the women was that they recognized an important role previously filled by their mother as a friend, mentor, companion, idol, and model of their womanhood. In the second theme, the women all conveyed a similar psychological reaction to mother-death which was a negative implication that their mothers all apparently had neglected their own mental and physical healthcare. Finally in the third theme, the women related how they all experienced the pain of becoming an instant independent adult in their own development. Despite this emotional pain, all of the women had to learn to cope with this new reality of their self-identity as a motherless daughter in order to successfully complete the second "R" process (see p.24 for list of six "R"s).

As stated earlier, the second common theme of self-care disclosed as a new priority in the women's self-identity is also simultaneously introducing us partially to the third "R" process which is: Recollect and reexperience the deceased and the relationship. Although the participants in my study may not have been aware of this during the interview process, the questions of the GAMSII actually encouraged the women to reminisce about their deceased mothers and their previous relationships with them.

According to Rando (1993), reminiscing about the deceased and the previous relationship is necessary for the healthy accommodation of the loss (p.48). Specifically, the mourner must transform the relationship to the deceased from one of presence to one of memory (Irion, cited in Rando, 1993). However, I was very cautious with the women when discussing their emotions related to their experience of mother-death to maintain the boundaries of the study using the GAMSII tool. As the reader may recall, I outlined in chapter one on page 7 that it was not my intention to actively engage in the participants' grief process.

To clarify, the third "R" process includes recollection and reexperience of the deceased and the relationship but most of the women in my study were ostensibly beyond the fourth "R" process and involved in the accommodation phase of grief and mourning (see page 81 for further explanation of this observation/finding). Generally, the narratives shared by the women in response to the questions of the GAMSII were an explanation of how they learned to live with the loss of their mother, by describing her maternal style; communication and relationship skills; and, what meaning their relationship had upon her identity. The third "R" process also helped the women to identify any unfinished business they may have had with their mother and discover what issues remained to be addressed (Rando, 1993, p.421). For example, all of the women reacted to the separation from their mother by stating what they learned from the experience of her death.

The first common lesson learned was the theme of how we as humans take people for granted. Three of the women related this thematic lesson in response to question E-1 and E-2; and, these same three women made additional comments about this theme in questions E-2, E-2c, & E-2d. One woman only referred to this theme in question E-3. And finally, one woman mentioned this theme only in question E-4. Again, question E-1 is: Please describe what has happened to you in the time since your mother died. For example, what changes if any, have occurred to you, in you, and in your life since your mother's death? And E-2 is: Do you feel changed by this death? E-2c is: What percentage of your old self are you back to? E-2d is: Do you feel, think, or act differently than before? If so, how? E-3 is: If this death has affected the way you look at and live life, how has it done so? E-4 is: What, if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss? The first of three women (E-1 & E-2c-d) said:

E-1: "...uhm I think having her pass away has made me realize that we're not all around for very long and I try to make the most of staying close with people and keeping in touch and sort of...especially with my dad, I find that I'm more terrified now that the loss of one and the loss of another is going to be pretty difficult so uhm...I try and just really stay very close and that sort of idea. I took people for granted before my mom died and it hits you so hard and now I think wow...we can be taken any day now....now I realize the value of being close with someone and having that kind of relationship there to support you and try and get through it.

You know you grow up as a kid thinking your parents are always going to be there for you and I think all the fighting and being so petty about certain things and now I feel like I should have made the most of that time instead of being a bratty child...

I think it's made me kind of open my eyes up to how other people perceive their parents and kind of I make the most of that time I actually spend with my other friend's mothers..." (Participant #2).

E-2d: "My thinking has changed because I'm aware that time runs out"  
(Participant #2).

Similarly the second woman (E-1 & E-2d) said:

E-1: "With death it helps you see how finite things can be...so I try to be more present and not let stress get me trapped in forward thinking because life is now and you learn not to take things for granted.

We were always a very close family and our connection has become strengthened since her death."

E-2d: "My thinking has changed and I take life less for granted"  
(Participant #4).

And the third woman (E-1 and E-2, E-2c and E-2d) said:

E-1: "...my mom organized everything and my dad didn't even realize it until after she died that he didn't know how to use a washing machine or a dryer...like nothing...he didn't know how to wash clothes or what food to buy or cook...he was absolutely clueless that she did everything for him and us and worked as a g.p....I gained a real appreciation for who made my lunch and through my dad I learned how much she did for him and I had a different, more appreciation for our family and how it functioned,..."

E-2: "...we had to get to know one another because me and my dad didn't know each other at all...and we had to sort out our fights as my mom was always the mediator before...she would smooth things out so without her there as the backbone we had to do it ourselves and learn to apologize to one another."

E-2c: "...I definitely spend more energy on relationships and I went to Vancouver for the day to visit my sister and hang out where as before my mom died I took people for granted and I would only visit if it was convenient for me. Now I make time."

E-2d: "My actions have changed as I keep-in-contact with my grandmother, my aunt, and cousin in Ontario by writing letters and visiting" (Participant #5).

One woman spoke about how we take people for granted theme only in question E-3. Again, question E-3 is: If this death has affected the way you look at and live life, how has it done so?

E-3: "I'd say I take people less for granted and sort of a consciousness that I could lose people at anytime; just sort of putting more work into some relationships and making sure people know how I feel about them and trying to resolve problems with people"  
(Participant #1).

And finally, one woman mentioned this theme only in question E-4. Again, question E-4 is: What, if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss?

E-4: "I really learned how important the relationship with my mother was...ah I guess I really didn't think about it before I just took it for granted. It was something I expected to have for a long time. Uhm, I really learned ah, it became very clear to me that relationships I had with separate people who I could connect with; and, who was just someone I had similar interests to and just hang around with or something like that" (Participant #3).

Consequently, at this point we learn through the women's narratives in the third "R" process that the confrontation phase of grief and mourning includes two distinct challenges. First of all, in order for a woman to complete the third "R" process she must review and remember her relationship with her mother realistically. For example, at the time of their mother's death many if not all of the women in my study were not ready to detach from their mothers and they all may have had a similar assumptive world by slightly taking their mothers for granted (Rando, 1993, p. 50 and 51). Secondly, the women must revive and reexperience their feelings about their attachment to their mother to continue the process of letting

her go (Rando, 1993, p.45 & 50). However, the emotional content of their disclosures were mostly memories of the feelings between themselves and their mothers for what used to be and for the meaning and significance that their mother still may hold in their life (Rando, 1993, p. 422). Therefore it would have been inappropriate for me to further explore the feeling of “functional guilt” (Rando, 1993, p.483) likely connected to the women’s common theme of how we as humans may take our mothers’ for granted. Moreover it would have been equally improper to process the participants’ feelings of detachment in the third “R” process. Yet, Rando insists that the feelings must be felt to complete the third “R” (p.421). All of the women disclosed that they did have someone to assist them to process their emotions in the early stages of their grief and mourning. Thus, it is my belief that all of the women met the criteria to complete the third “R” and it was a healthy mourning process previously facilitated for them (Rando, 1993, p.422).

In the fourth “R” process, the women must complete the confrontation phase of grief and mourning by beginning to: “Relinquish the old attachments to the deceased and the assumptive world” (Rando, 1993). This “R” process is germane to Rando’s theory of how mourners can transform their previous relationship with the deceased. In addition, Rando states that the mourner must surrender her attachments to her old assumptive world constructed on the basis of the loved one’s existence (Rando, 1993, p.50). This means that if the “R” process is not completed

successfully the women could be at risk of being stuck in their grief process, and potentially exposed to a symptom or syndrome related to complicated mourning. At this point, it is important to reiterate that all of the women involved in my study had the opportunity to process their grief with an experienced professional in loss and bereavement issues. Therefore, I did not anticipate that many if any at all of the women in my study would display serious symptoms or syndromes associated with complicated mourning.

However, I was slightly concerned about Participant #1 who had previously been exposed to multiple trauma(s). For example, Participant #1 disclosed that her younger brother had died from leukemia in January of 1999, and her maternal grandfather had died of heart problems in April of 1999, and her mother committed suicide in April of 2000. Also, her mother's suicide potentially had either unfinished business which could affect her fourth "R" process (see p. 24 or 86 for the definition of the fourth "R" process); and/or, she could have potentially been overwhelmed by chronic mourning. In the past, Participant #1 had had intensive psychotherapy with a professional therapist paid for by her father who is a medical doctor financially assisting her. Despite my concern, Participant #1 used language in her response to question E-3 that clearly indicated she had begun the processes involved in the fourth "R" (see p. 24 or 86 for the definition of the fourth "R" process). For example, Participant #1 stated:

“...I have more of a feeling that I can handle bad things that do happen. I’m sort of realizing & accepting when things are out of my control and just trying to manage the things I can control in my life. Not like I’m not like that all the time but sort of realizing that’s how I feel I need to be able to cope with things...”

which reveals she is both adapting to the loss of her mother and relinquishing her former assumptions about her world (Rando, 1993, p.51 & 423). To be brief, Participant #1 used language usually acquired through reading self-help counseling material or personal counseling which reveals an acceptance and comprehension about the processes of transformation and change in ones’ personal life in response to uncontrollable life events. Thus, my previous concern noted about Participant #1 was alleviated by her personal acceptance of the fourth “R” process which is detachment from her mother and her previous assumptive world.

Participants 2, 3, 4, and 5 also used similar language patterns indicating their general adaption to the loss of their mothers and relinquishing their former assumptions about their world to complete the fourth “R” process (see p. 24 or 85 for the definition of the fourth “R” process). For example they stated individually that:

E-2b: “For the most part, I’ve found happiness since the experience...I think just through the experiences of having her around I feel that has provided me with sort of the memories and that sort of thing and finding happiness through it...I just feel lucky and happy because of her and I

think just having her in my life has made me how I am & I think that's the only thing I can take from the experience of having her die is just the memories...she really cared about me...I read through her journals..."(Participant #2).

- E-3: "...uhm, I've grown more accepting towards a lot of things...it's just shown me to move on and not dwell on certain things and just keep going...so I'm not the type of person to stay stuck in things,...and I know my mom would not want me to stay stuck so that's kind of what pushes me through..."(Participant #2).
- E-1: "I gained more of a womanly or maternal sense...I needed to nurture myself maternally because no one else was going to..." (Participant #3);
- E-3a: "Before the death, I guess I thought there was a reason why everyone would pass away. I really don't think there is one that we can explain anyway...that life is something you should live for the moment...sounds cliché...because you don't know what will happen...uhm, I think you just live and get the most out of your experiences...you don't have as much control as you think..." (Participant #3).
- E-2c: "I'm quite a bit different in that I'm more mellow...things feel more normal now than it did immediately after her death...I was shaken up and vulnerable ya so I guess that part has died down..." (Participant #4);
- E-3a: "My philosophy of life seems to be about prevention and nurturing...well I'm sure her death has help me to foster more compassion...and I just want myself to get it together and get on with things" (Participant #4);
- E-4: I've learned not to be afraid of death and encompass it as part of understanding life"(Participant #4).
- E-2c: "I have a different outlook and think differently and I grew up. I don't get completely stressed out as much or worry as much...there are certain things I do that remind me of her like when I hear the CBC on the radio I think of her and if I'm missing her I phone my sister if I need to talk" (Participant #5).

In each of their statements, the women disclose how they have changed by transforming the death of their mothers' into a personal growth experience of becoming a more aware and independent individual.

Finally, all of the women in my study appeared to present themselves in the interviews as mostly involved in the accommodation phase of grief and mourning. The goal of accommodation is to learn to live with the loss and readjust one's life accordingly (Rando, 1993, p.41). To be brief, accommodation means that the women accept the death of their mothers' in the sense of learning to live with this reality as an inescapable fact of life. Also, accommodation reflects a choice that pertains to each woman's perspective or attitude she will take toward her life as mourning brings her to a changed state (Rando, 1993, p.41). Specifically it means that even though each woman may recognize her pain of separating from her mother, she will decide that the loss will have some positive meaning for the remainder of her own life.

As mentioned earlier in the fourth "R" process, some of the women's dialogue may have slightly foreshadowed the beginning of the accommodation phase of mourning. For example, when the women stated a positive skill they learned from the death was that they were all generally able to cope with it by being positive and moving forward in their own life. In general, the women's

accommodation additionally means that they have learned to live with mourning their mothers' in ways that do not interfere with the ongoing healthy functioning in their new life without their mother. Essentially, accommodation centers on learning to live with the fact of the loved one's absence and moving forward in their new world despite the fact that the psychic scar caused by the loss will remain and, on occasion, bring pain (Rando, 1993, p. 42).

The fifth "R" process is: Readjust to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the old. The key word in the fifth "R" process is adaptively. It is on the definition of this term that the diagnosis of complicated mourning often turns (Rando, 1993, p.429). For our purposes, I will review the most relevant parts of the four subprocesses of the fifth "R" to determine if all of the women have actively participated in creating a healthy connection to their deceased mothers'; and, concurrently moved forward to create a new world for themselves. The four subprocesses are as follows: a) revising the assumptive world; b) developing a new relationship with the deceased; c) adopting new ways of being in the world; and, d) forming a new identity. According to Rando (1993), where any one or a combination of the four subprocesses essential for readjustment are compromised, mourning becomes complicated (p.429).

The four subprocesses interrelate with and influence one another (Rando, 1993, p. 429). For example, changes in the assumptive world may lead to changed behaviours, which can lead to an altered identity. Likewise, changes in one's identity may cause one to perceive the world differently (i.e., revise the assumptive world) as well as conduct oneself differently in it (i.e., adopt new ways of being). Briefly stated, these four subprocesses are parts of a whole but do not follow a rigid format or a chronological order of occurrence (Rando, 1993, p.430). On page 39, I discussed how the whole group of women related a common thematic lesson of learning not to take people for granted while reviewing the content of the third "R". Similarly, all of the women mentioned two additional common thematic lessons which occurred to them as a result of their thematic discovery noted above and related to the fifth "R" and sixth "R" (see page 24 for list of six "R" processes of mourning).

All of the women identified that the new common awareness of not taking people for granted lead to the collective appreciation for the theme of how life is precious which is directly linked to the critical concept of adaption in the fifth "R" process. Two women stated this in question E-1 with an additional comment by each one in question E-2d and E-2e. One woman mentioned this theme in question E-2b and d and E-3. One woman stated this theme in both

question E-3 and E-4. And finally, one woman dealt with this theme in question E-4 only. Again, question E-1 is: Please describe what has happened to you in the time since your mother died. For example, what changes if any, have occurred to you, in you, and in your life since your mother's death? E-2d is: Do you feel, think, or act differently than before? If so, how?

E-1: "Her death has also made me aware that at work or in a vocation you have to take care of yourself as well...our family connection has become strengthened since her death and for we are getting on with our lives and ...we try to make sure we maintain closeness...sometimes I yearn her..." (Participant #4).

E-2d: "I act differently because I take more care of myself and I nurture my fiancée (i.e.: cooking for him etc.); and I feel differently as I feel a void and more into prevention; and I think differently and take life less for granted..." (Participant #4).

Again, question E-1 is: Please describe what has happened to you in the time since your mother died. For example, what changes if any, have occurred to you, in you, and in your life since your mother's death? E-2e is: "What is the current impact, if any, of grief and mourning on your ability to function normally (physically, socially, spiritually, occupationally, or financially)?"

E-1: "Almost immediately after my mom passed away, I finished up highschool and I immediately went away traveling by myself. I had this need to gain life experience and do as much as I could within as little time as possible. I had a real need to explore. Uhm...I guess because my mother died fairly young I had this feeling that I needed to achieve as much as possible so if I pass away when I'm young as well I don't have any regrets about waiting until I'm older...I know

my parents planned on working really hard and then retiring early and then having all their fun and that didn't work out for them so I don't want to be the same way I just treat my job as a source of income whereas growing up it was bred into me work was more important than it is now. It became really important to explore spirituality and that I go to a meditation retreat and spend some more time focusing on my own spirituality..."(Participant #3).

E-2e: "In some ways, I'm lucky to have experienced a death at a young age because the person I've become is better;...uhm...I've learned just how fragile life is and it's normal to live and die and not be obsessed with material things...uhm I guess also not to attach too much dependency on other people. Become more self-reliant..." (Participant#3).

E-2b is: In what ways are you the same as before? E-2d is: Do you feel, think, or act differently than before? If so, how? E-3 is: If this death has affected the way you look at and live life, how has it done so?

E-2b: "My mom called me her sunshine and I think she used to sing You are my sunshine song when I went to bed...my mom had taken time off work and stayed at home to raise me and that was about baking cookies...and just the whole atmosphere of being at home with your mom and I think everything about that were good memories for me. She really cared about me and because I was the baby I think I got a lot more attention than everybody else..." (Participant #2)

E-2d: "I act differently by giving more than taking...speaking up...and I don't hold grudges; I feel more realistic and forgiving; I have more common sense and I am less naive in my thinking and I know time runs out" (Participant #2).

E-3: "...I think as a child you expect that your parents are going to be there for you and see you get married and I feel that I've been let down in some respects...that that's not gonna

happen and there's always going to be that bump in the road that she won't be there for but at the same time I try and tell myself everyday that you get more frustrated and think about that it's teaching you a lesson that you gotta just push through it and stay strong about it" (Participant #2).

E-3 is: If this death has affected the way you look at and live life, how has it done so? E-4 is: What, if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss?

E-3 "Uhm...well my mother had this poem Desirada and she pretty much lived her life according to that poem...that's nice to have, my sister and I have the poem hanging in both of our houses, and she would tell us that poem in answer to our questions...it was like a code of conduct for her. And I try to use that poem as a guide in how to make my choices as an adult. Since my mom died the poem is more meaningful now..." (Participant #5).

E-4 "I learned how important relationships are for your happiness and how it gives you a feeling of fulfillment and completeness which doesn't come from things it comes from giving...I learned how important mom was in my life; my dad said: "Your mom did a good job raising you" and also how important marriage is and having someone there to get you through a illness and now I am always the first person to send a card when I hear someone is in the hospital; the card is so important for support and to give people hope. I learned how strong I was to get through this and how I am independent and now I've been brought closer to my dad. Both my mom and dad won awards as physicians & they got calls from the USA to work there and my dad wanted to go and work in the USA to make as much money as a hockey player and my mom said: "then you're going alone" to the USA because she wasn't like that and she was really tied to the community..." (Participant #5).

E-4 is: What, if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss?

E-4: "I have sort of discovered/developed coping resources that I probably wouldn't have had otherwise...it was something that was hard to find a whole lot of positives about...I mean losing my mom...may-be a positive would be that I try to consciously do other things with my life rather than be self-destructive or negative like my mom was...and sort of not really follow her...the way she was in relationships with some people...sort of neediness and the kind of guilt trips she would put on people and dependency and that kind of stuff...I think just with her whole life she put too much of her self-identity on how other people viewed her specifically from other people needing her and taking her self-esteem from caretaking and being needed by other people rather than just sort of having her own focus in her life, and her own sort of driving forces in herself" (Participant #1).

In summary, all of the women disclosed changes similar to the subprocesses of the fifth "R" throughout their narratives in reflection of the life-as-precious theme. Most importantly however, they all reveal a clear sense of adaption to the common loss of their mothers by discussing their plans for the future. In Rando's (1993) model this completion of the subprocesses of the fifth "R" is a significant part of the third and final phase of grief and mourning which is accommodation. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the distinct pattern of accommodation in all of the women's narratives thus far may indicate that none of the women experienced complicated mourning syndromes or symptoms at this point in their adaption to their mothers' death.

In the sixth "R", reinvest is a process which requires the mourner to re-direct the emotional energy that was once aimed at the relationship with the deceased toward a new and rewarding investment (Rando, 1993, p.

448). This redirection of energies will not, of course replace their mother but it can reconnect the women with new people, objects, activities, goals or causes that can provide emotional gratification to compensate for the relationship which was lost due to mother-death. The object of reinvestment may be tangible (i.e.: another person, house, or art collection) or psychosocial (i.e.: a relationship, a new career, or volunteer work). According to Rando (1993), energy does not have to be reinvested in precisely the same object or role from which it was withdrawn. The sole requirement for healthy reinvestment is that the mourner places the emotional energy and involvement in a source that will return it (p.449).

Yet, in the actual interviews the women reported a final common thematic lesson as mentioned earlier on page 48 of this chapter. All five participants stated how they all became more verbally and nonverbally expressive of their own emotions as a result of experiencing mother-death. It appeared as though this change in self-expression was a precursor to reinvestment for the women in my study. Rando (1993) states that unacknowledged and unexpressed emotion is a major precipitant of complicated mourning (p.47). Also, she suggests the mourner must find personally comfortable and appropriate avenues of verbal and nonverbal expression for their emotional responses associated to the loss (p.48). Only by repeatedly reviewing the unique relationship in its totality will the mourner be able to identify the feelings and thoughts that need to be processed in order to ultimately alter her emotional attachment to and

investment in the deceased (p.49). Two women identified this theme in question E-1. One woman only spoke of this theme in question E-2a and E-2d. One woman addressed this theme in question E-3a only. And finally, one woman related this thematic information in question 4 only. Again, question E-1 is: Please describe what has happened to you in the time since your mother died. For example, what changes if any, have occurred to you, in you, and in your life since your mother's death?

E-1: "Internally: I had a different outlook and was more expressive with my emotions...growing up I had a really hard time telling somebody that I loved them...I came out of my shell. Uhm...saying how I feel was huge...I was embarrassed to say things before and our family sort of saw it as a sign of weakness...we had a family rule of no whining but after my mom passed away I learned how important it is to whine when you need to" (Participant #5).

E-1: Social: "Socially I find that I'm trying to make the most of the sort of friendships and family that I have...uhm I think having her pass away has made me realize that we're not all around for very long and I try to make the most of staying close with people and keeping in touch...I took people for granted before my mom died...and now I think wow...we can be taken any day now... I'm more connected socially now and I try to use my friendships as a way to try and vent out things now...whereas before may-be I didn't want to get as close or say anything...now I realize the value of being close with someone and having that kind of relationship there to support you and try and get through it" (Participant #2).

Question E-2 is: Do you feel changed by this death?; and E-2a is: "If so in what ways are you different (specify what context signifies it)?" E-2d is: Do you feel, think, or act differently than before? If so, how?

E-2a: Positive: "Okay...well it definitely changed me, I think I took on a lot of my mother's characteristics...I think is positive for example such things as her nurturing capabilities.

I'm a lot more emotionally experienced and understanding for other people going through really traumatic experiences I think."

E-2d: Actions: "I'm more affectionate and more open";

Feelings: "I pay more attention to feelings and I follow instinct and intuition; I'm more patient and attentive to gut/body feelings";  
(Participant #3).

E-3 is: If this death has affected the way you look at and live life, how has it done so? E-3a: How has the death affected your assumptive world (i.e., your assumptions, expectations, and beliefs about and view of the world), religion, or philosophy of life?

E-3a: "...I'd say I take people less for granted and sort of a consciousness that I could lose people at anytime; just sort of putting more work into relationships and making sure people know how I feel about them and trying to resolve problems with people...if I had children I would want them to know it was okay to acknowledge that a death of a parent happened and express their feelings about it rather than just covering it up and moving on immediately...I also believe it's important to have time alone for your child to talk about the deceased parent....I think it's important to talk about things and have the courage to face something instead of just running away from it" (Participant #1).

E-4 is: What, if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss?

E-4: Positive: "I've definitely learned how important it is to manage all these things we've talked about like: the health, vocation, and relationship,...I'd like for not any one to take over too much seeing that played out with my mom...balance is a good word...and not try and put things off to much. I mean there were certainly things I didn't get to say to her and I didn't really like where we were at when she died...I've learned the value of being more self-expressive and present.

I mean right even at the end it was so fast I don't remember how long it was before she died that I even got to say that I loved her...it might have been a week and a half before ahh I was so angry and trying as hard as I could not to be present...but I missed out on a lot ...there's plenty of things I wanted to say...I learned to act d to

be done in that realm....I learned saying good-bye needs to be personally expressive and meaningful" (Participant #4).

### **Summary of Results:**

As a collective, the young women I interviewed appeared to be well established in their process of accommodating to life without a mother as they were all moving on with their lives and had plans for their futures' (see p.95). All of the women recognized that their mother's death was a defining moment of vulnerability in their personal development. This finding was revealed in the data relating to the completion of the second "R" process which is: "React to the separation" (see p.24). All of the women reported the same psychological reaction to their mother's death when they disclosed their feelings of: "growing up instantly"; and, they also all reported the same theme of an "instant independent-adult status in their self-identity" as a direct result of the death (see pages 76, 77, and 80). However, this group of women appeared to draw strength from their vulnerability. For example, all of the participants could state a similar positive skill they learned from the death which was about having a better relationship with themselves or others involved in their lives (see narratives noted by all participants on pages 89-98). This finding is consistent with the positive relationship between the strong numbers of degree of consolidation in the ISI results in most of the five women and the discovery that all of the women were in the accommodation phase of mourning in the GAMSII responses. Thus it appears that the processes of

mourning in the Rando model coincide with the ISI outcome measure of degree of consolidation of self-development. Unfortunately, the ISI does not offer a rationale of why Participant #5 is not as strong in her degree of consolidation as compared to the other participants.

Four of the five participants all indicated that their mother's death had a significant impact upon their self-identity. For example, Participant #1 reported in her responses to the ISI that she would make different choices in her vocation and in her marriage as a direct result of her experience with mother-death. Specifically, she described that her communication with her partner would be more constructive and conscious about naming patterns of behaviour within the dynamics of their relationship. Currently, Participant #1's partner has the freedom to communicate with her when he observes that she is displaying an attitude of self-pity or depression-like symptoms. Participant #1 prefers that her partner confront this behaviour as she believes that her own parents used avoidance as a means of not taking responsibility for expressing their emotions in their marriage. Specifically, during crisis periods in their marriage Participant #1 did not witness her parents involved in any intimate dialogue to assist each other to cope or express themselves.

As previously noted, Participant #1 did not believe that her mother had enough interests outside of her caretaking role in their family. Therefore,

Participant #1 was planning to be involved in more adult roles outside of her marriage and maintain a career. Participant #1 also indicated in her responses to the GAMSII that her mother's death left her feeling insecure and vulnerable as a deficient young adult.

Participant #3 also indicated that her mother's death affected her self-identity. In the ISI questions, Participant #3 reveals how she was confused at university until her second year of studies as her mother was the one she checked in with about her choices (see page 73); and, in the domain of spirituality she indicated that she began asking herself why she was here on earth and what was the meaning of her own existence after her mother died? These spiritual questions lead to her exploration of Buddhism. In the GAMSII, Participant #3 explained that through her mother's death she learned that life can pass you by and sudden death can disrupt your plans and dreams as an individual and as a couple. For example, she stated that her parents deferred all their plans for traveling until their official age of retirement. Immediately after her mother's death she made plans to travel in case she too died young like her mother.

Participant #4 disclosed in the first domain of the ISI that her mother's death had an impact on her plans to complete her education as her mother had been a principal at a Montessori school. In the GAMSII, Participant #4 emphasized her concern about her own self-care and

stressed the importance of taking time to relax, exercise, and meditate.

Participant #4 had memories of her mother almost working non-stop until approximately one to two weeks before she had reduced lung capacity and was on oxygen and morphine.

Participant #5 did not make any obvious statements in her responses to the questions of the ISI about how her mother's death affected her.

However on page 74, she states that she learned how important her mom was in her life and how she wanted to be just like her. In the domain of vocation, Participant #5 appeared to be struggling with a final career choice. Earlier in chapter three on page 26, I suggested that if it was appropriate I would explore any "hints in the women's disclosures which may be after-effects of the loss". Even though this is speculative in nature, I thought that perhaps Participant #5 may have needed to do some more soul-searching about her desire to be just like her mother specifically in the domain of a career choice as I sensed Participant #5 may have had aspirations of being a medical doctor like her mother. Yet, Participant #5 may have been lacking in personal encouragement to pursue medicine? In the GAMSII, Participant #5 did not indicate that her self-identity had been compromised by her mother's death. Rather Participant #5 reported that she felt enlightened about the importance of relationships in one's life and their significance of providing happiness, fulfillment, and

completeness which does not come from material things, instead it comes from the act of giving.

Participant #2 did not reveal any specific information about the negative effects of her mother's death upon her self-identity. She did indicate she was now more fearful of losing her father since the loss of her mother. However, in the domain of personal history Participant #2 disclosed that prior to her mother's terminal diagnosis of cancer she had learned that her mother had been involved in a long-term affair which led to her parent's divorce. At her parent's request she attended therapy to deal with both simultaneous crises.

A major assumption of this study was that late-adolescent females were more at risk of chronic mourning if their grief process was not properly facilitated and supported (see page six). However, the flaw in this assumption was my own preoccupation and concern that most young women do not seek out counseling. Earlier on page 82, I documented my observation that most of the participants in my study were beyond the fourth "R" process. In addition, on pages 85 and 86 I noted that all of the participants had disclosed that they had received some type of counseling to facilitate their grief through Rando's six "R" process. Since all of the participants were approximately involved in the fourth or fifth "R" process of Rando's model and all of them were in the accommodation phase of

mourning, it became redundant to argue whether their processes of mourning coincided with Rando's model. The participants' descriptions of themes of mourning were almost identical to one another which lends support to Rando's theory (p.24 - list of six "R" processes of mourning).

Question 91:

Participant #1 indicated that her personal history was the most impactful upon her personal identity since her mother's death. Participant #2 indicated that her vocational plans were the area most predominant part of her identity impacted by her mother's death. And finally, Participant's 3, 4, and 5 all indicated that the domain of marriage and the role of spouse was the area of their self-identity most impacted by their mother's death. There was not enough qualifying information to interpret the validity of this response as a significant result. However, it does indicate where further investigation could take place which will be discussed in chapter five.

Supplementary Questions:

As previously noted on page 29, the participants were being asked the same supplementary questions in the domain of marriage and the role of spouse:

- 51) As you think about the activities involved in marriage and your role as a (wife/partner), what would you say you anticipate to be most satisfying or rewarding for you?

and the domain of religious beliefs:

- 73) What started you thinking about these questions?

- 74) How old were you at the time?
- 76) Do you feel that you've resolved these questions for yourself, or are you still working on them?

repetitively by myself as the investigator. As the participants responded to the ISI questions noted above, it became necessary for me to ensure that the transcript officially recorded their responses as they were specifically associated with mother-death. Later on, these questions and responses may be more pertinent for the purposes of assessing the validity of the research questions or future research.

## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions:

The results from this study support the conclusion that mother-death in late-adolescence has a significant impact on a daughter's self-identity as a woman. The findings consistently demonstrate that the majority of the participants perceive their previous relationships with their mother as meaningful and influential upon their choices of self-identity. Four of the five participants had strong consolidation of self-identity as evidenced by high scores of the ISI (>85). The other participant although of positive consolidation was not as highly rated by the ISI as the other respondents. Therefore, interpreting these scores alone indicates that part of the answer to the research question is that sudden mother-death did not compromise the entire consolidation process of identity formation in this group of participants.

Closer analysis of the ISI results combined with the responses to the GAMSII revealed that mother-death in late adolescence did affect the women's choices of self-identity. For example each woman in the group felt the death of their mother was a loss of a primary resource of their self-esteem as they needed their mother's presence to affirm their progressive choices of constructing their self-identity. This finding is consistent with

Zall's study (1994) which found that the same-sex parent was needed for development.

More specifically, the results of the current study demonstrate two points noted in the literature review. First of all, a study by Kirsch, Shore and Kyle (1976) found that relationships with the mother seemed more important than those with the father (cited by Marcia, 1980). Two participants referred to their mothers as the foundation or cornerstone of the family's communication especially with conflict resolution and mediation of household and relationship issues. The same two participants disclosed that their fathers' stated very clearly after their mother's death that: "your mom did a good job raising you". This acknowledgement of their mothers' role by their father was a confirmation for both women that their fathers' understood their mothers' primary importance in their personal development (Participant #2 and #5). Secondly, these results confirm that Gray's (1989) assertion that women are more at risk of chronic mourning if their grief is not properly facilitated (p.6). The results indicate that all of the women disclosed that they had received professional counselling. This may relate to why there were no signs or symptoms of complicated mourning found in the participants. This group of women were highly self-aware and possessed sophisticated communication skills.

Limitations:

These conclusions should be considered in light of the following limitations.

A major limitation of this study was related to the collection of data by means of self-reports. The pencil and paper questionnaire and the interview/discussion instruments allow subjects the freedom to include or exclude any information they desire. These approaches allow the subjects to present irrelevant information based upon their possible susceptibility to presenting socially desirable responses. Another limitation is the exclusive focus on the Rando model.

Another important limitation that must be taken into consideration is that participants were all volunteers. Perhaps individuals who signed up to be in the study had had at least some positive experiences with their mother's death whereas individuals who refrained from participating in the study did so because of a negative experience with mother-death.

The research data was collected from a sample of five volunteer participants thus limiting the generalizability of the research results. Furthermore, the research participants were recruited from the university campus only which stereotypically attracts students from middle-to-upper-class backgrounds. Students on campus with parental or spousal financial assistance may have access to more mental health resources and personal growth experiences as compared to a non-campus volunteer.

Implications:

The results from the present study have implications for both future research and counseling.

Future research. This study looked at the mother-daughter relationship from the perspective of the late adolescent/early adult daughter and identified what affected her development after her mother's death. Future research is needed to evaluate the relationship from pre-mother-death period for the purpose of identifying what aspects of the relationship already positively or negatively affected the daughter's development. And future studies could investigate alternate models of mourning. An important question arising from this study that needs to be addressed is: To what extent are mothers aware of the contributions they make to the sense of self-identity in their adolescent children through the providing of role modeling and social learning, and are they aware of the impact of their role on their children as lifelong mentors?

Further studies might investigate late-adolescent/early adult females perceptions of mothers in different cultures to determine what differences exist and provide empirically based explanations for differences found.

Implications for counselling. The results of this study have implications for professional helpers who counsel either adolescents or older female adults whose presenting problem involves mother-death.

Today, perhaps more than ever before, adolescent/young adult women view their lives after graduation from high school or a post-secondary education with concern and anxiety, particularly when faced with making vital decisions about their future roles in relationships, careers, and issues of spirituality. This uncertainty is further compounded by the adolescents'/young adults' sense of worry, anxiety, grief and mourning about making decisions about their self-identity without a mother. In light of the results of the present study, female counselors could play an invaluable role in helping their late-adolescent/young adult female clients come to terms with their feelings of the uncertainty about the future. This will require counselors of late-adolescent/young adult females to expand their counseling repertoire to include skills for working with clients who actually do experience complicated mourning. This will require the creation of further in-depth bereavement courses available at professional development workshops or graduate schools to take up the challenge of reaching a wider audience about complicated mourning and self-identity choices in females.

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## APPENDIX A

### Identity Status Interview (ISI): Late Adolescent College Form Modified

James E. Marcia and Sally L. Archer  
(Referenced as Appendix B in Marcia et al., 1993)

#### **Personal History (6minutes approx.)**

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) Where are you from originally?
- 3) And where are you living now?
- 4) How do you feel about living in \_\_\_\_\_?
- 5) At what age were you when your mother died? Is your father still living?
- 6) (If not:) At what age were you when your (father) died?
- 7) Had** your parents ever been separated or divorced?  
(If yes:) At what age were you when your parents separated?  
(If appropriate:) Whom did you live with then?  
(If appropriate:) **Did** either of your parents remarry?  
(If yes:) What age were you at this time?
- 8) Can you tell me something about your father's educational background?
- 9) And what type of work does he do?
- 10) And your mother, what was her educational background?
- 11) And was she employed outside the home?
- 12) Do you have any brothers or sisters?  
(If yes:) What are their ages?
- 13) What have you done about continued schooling, work, and marriage since high school?

**Vocational Plans (10 minutes approx.)**

14) Are you attending school now?

15) How did you decide on attending \_\_\_\_\_ (name of college or other postsecondary school)? What year are you in now?

16) When did you first become interested in \_\_\_\_\_?

17) What do you find attractive about this field?

18) What drawbacks do you see about the field?

19) Since you have been at college, have you thought about any other program besides \_\_\_\_\_?

(If yes:) What else have you considered?

**Supplemental questions:**

20) (If not already evident:) Was there ever a time when you were trying to decide between two very different directions for your life, in terms of the work you wished to pursue?

21) (If yes:) What were your alternatives then?

22) What influenced your decision here?

**Primary questions:**

23) Most parents have plans for their children, things they'd like to see them go into, things they'd to see them do. Did your folks have any plans like that for you?

24a) Do you think your parents may have had a preference for one field over another, although they would never have tried to pressure you about it?

b) (If necessary:) How do your parents feel about your plans to go into \_\_\_\_\_ (Respondent's current career plans)?

c) How willing do you think you'd be to change your plans from \_\_\_\_\_ (Respondent's current career plans), if something better came along?

d) (If asked: "What do you mean by better? Respond: "Whatever might be better to your standards.")

e) (If respondent indicates the possibility of change:) What might you change to?

25) What might cause you to make such a change?

26) How likely do you think it is that you will make some change?

27) On a 7-point scale, how important do you see your vocation as being to you in your life, where 7 means "extremely important" and 1 means "not at all important"?

**Marriage and the Role of Spouse (13 minutes approx.)**

28) Are you currently in a romantic and/or committed relationship with someone?

Describe: 1) heterosexual/ alternative lifestyle; and,  
2) married or common-law ?

(If not), Do you plan to marry someday?

(If yes:) Why do you plan to marry?

29) When do you think would be a good time for you to marry?

30) Why then?

31) What kind of a person would you want to marry?

32) How do you picture what marriage might be like for you?

33) What do you see as your role as a (wife/partner)?

34) How would you compare your ideas about marriage with those of your (mother)? (Make comparison with the parent of the same gender as the Respondent.)

**If “no” to question: #28 “Do you plan to marry someday?”**

35) (If no:) Have you ever thought about the idea of marriage?

36) Why do you think you prefer not to marry?

**Read #37 to subject slowly to list “advantages” and “disadvantages”**

37) What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of being single versus being married?

38) Has your decision about (marrying) (not marrying) come easily to you, or has it been a difficult decision to make?

**Supplemental questions:**

39) Why do you think it has?

40) Who may have been a factor in your decision?

41) (If not already evident:) Have you ever gone through an important change in your thinking about marriage for yourself?

(If yes:) Please describe that change.

42) What started you thinking about these questions?

43) Who may have been a factor in your thinking?

44) How would you describe your parents' marriage?

45) What do you think of the marriage your parents (have) (had)?

46) Would you like your marriage to be similar to theirs?

47) How do your parents feel about your ideas on marriage?

48) (If parents do not know:) How do you think they would feel about them if they did know?

**Primary Questions:**

49) (If yes to question #28:)

How does the person you are presently involved with feel about your ideas on marriage?

50) How do your ideas about marriage compare with (his) (hers)?

**Primary question:**

57) On a 7-point scale, how important do you see marriage and the role of a spouse as being to you in your life? Again, 7 means "extremely important" and 1 means "not at all important."

Supplemental Questions:

51) As you think about the activities involved in marriage and your role as a (wife/partner), what would you say you anticipate to be most satisfying or rewarding for you?

52) Is there anything about these activities that you anticipate will be a source of dissatisfaction for you?

53) How willing would you be to change your plans about marriage?

54) (If appropriate:) What would it take to change your ideas about marriage?

55) Do you anticipate that you might reexamine your decision at some time in the future?

56) (If yes:) When? Why then?

**Religious Beliefs (10 minutes approx.)**

58) I'd like to find out something about your ideas in the area of religion, for example on such questions as the existence of God, and the importance of organized religion. What are your ideas?

59) Do you have any religious preference?

60) How about your parents – do they have any religious preference?

61) Were both of your parents reared \_\_\_\_\_?

62) How important would you say religion is to your parents?

63) Have you ever been active in a church or church groups? (Adapt for Jews and others.)

**Supplemental Questions:**

64) Have you been active since (coming to college) (in the past several years)?

65) (If not already evident:) Do you currently attend religious services?

66) (If yes:) What are your reasons for attending services?

67) How do you feel while you are engaged in activities related to your religion?

68) Why do you think you feel that way?

**Primary Questions:**

69) Did you ever attend religious services with any frequency?

70) (If appropriate:) What has lead to your attendance at services to fall off?

71) Was there ever a time when you came to question, to doubt, or perhaps to change your religious beliefs?

72) (If yes:) What types of things did you question or change?

Supplemental Questions:

- 73) What started you thinking about these questions?
- 74) (If not already evident:) How old were you at the time?
- 75) How serious were these questions for you?
- 76) Do you feel that you've resolved these questions for yourself, or are you still working on them?
- 77) (If resolved:) What has helped you to answer these questions?
- 78) (If not resolved:) How are you going about trying to answer these questions?

**Primary Questions:**

- 79) How do your parents feel about your religious beliefs?
- 80) (If parents don't know:) How do you think they would feel about them if they did know?
- 81) Are there any important differences between your beliefs and those of your parents?
- 82) At this time, how well worked out do you think your ideas on religion are?

Supplemental Questions:

- 83) Do you think your ideas on religion are likely to remain stable, or do you believe they may very well change in the future?
- 84) (If they may change:) In what direction do you think your beliefs might change?
- 85) What might bring about such a change?
- 86) How likely is it that such a change might occur?
- (If you see evidence of continued thought being given to religious questions:)
- 87) How important is it to you to work out your ideas on religion?
- 88) Are you actively trying to work out your beliefs now, or are you more concerned with other things?

**Primary questions:**

89) On a 7-point scale, how important do you see your religious beliefs as being to you in your life? Again, 7 means "extremely important" and 1 means "not at all important."

90) (For agnostics and atheists, the last question in this domain should be:) On a 7-point scale, how important do you see your ideas about (agnosticism) (atheism) as being to you in your life? Again, 7 means "extremely important" and 1 means "not at all important."

**FINAL QUESTION:**

After #90 of ISI, ask participants to rank each of the four domains based on what they felt was the most impactful upon their identity after their mother's death? 1 is most impactful and 4 is least impactful.

- Personal History
- Vocational Plans
- Marriage & Role of Spouse
- Religious Beliefs

## APPENDIX B

### Grief and Mourning Status Interview and Inventory (GAMSII)

Dr. Therese A. Rando  
(Referenced Appendix in T.A. Rando, 1993)

#### PART III: Structured Interview Schedule

Topic Area E: Changes in the mourner and the mourner's life since the death

E-1 Please describe what has happened to you in the time since your mother died. For example, what changes if any, have occurred to you, in you, and in your life since your mother's death?

**Read to subject as examples of change(s):**

- gains or losses
- internal or external
- physical
- social
- spiritual
- occupational
- financial

E-2. Do you feel changed by this death?

- a) If so, in what ways are you different (positively and negatively)?  
**(Request positive examples and negative examples separately)**
- b) In what ways are you the same as before?
- c) What percentage of your old self are you back to?
- d) Do you feel, think, or act differently than before?  
If so, how?
- e) What is the current impact, if any, of grief and mourning on your ability to function normally **(physically, socially, spiritually, occupationally, or financially)**?

E-3. If this death has affected the way you look at and live life, how has it done so?

- a. How has the death affected your assumptive world (i.e., your assumptions, expectations, and beliefs about and view of the world), religion, or philosophy of life?

E-4. What, if anything, have you learned (positively or negatively) from this loss? **(Request positive and negative examples separately)**

**APPENDIX C****Resource List:**

“Motherless Daughters: the legacy of loss” by: Hope Edelman

“Mother of My Mother: the intricate bond between generations”  
by: Hope Edelman

“A Path Through Loss: A guide to writing your healing & growth”  
by: Dr. Nancy Reeves PHD

“Trust After Trauma: A guide to relationships for Survivors & Those who  
love them” by: Aphrodite Matsakis PHD

“Finishing Our Business With Mother” by: John Bradshaw  
Available at: [www.bradshawcassettes.com](http://www.bradshawcassettes.com) or Bradshaw Cassettes P.O.  
Box 720947 Houston, Texas USA 77272

Victoria Hospice Unit: 370-8715

“A Mother Loss Workbook: healing exercises for daughters” by: Diane  
Hambrook & Gail Eisenberg with Herma Rosenthal

Victoria Cancer Clinic Michael Boyle’s secretary Melanie 519-5525

## APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, RESEARCH Form HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE Consent)	Participant Consent Form (Informed Consent)
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### **Women who experience mother-death in adolescence & its' impact on their development.**

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled "Sudden Mother Death in Late Adolescence" that is being conducted by me: Cheryl McLoughlin. I am a graduate student in the department of Psychological Foundations & Leadership Studies, at the University of Victoria and you may contact me if you have any further questions at: 250-744-2627 (h) or pager 250-388-2586.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Master of Arts conducted under the supervision of Dr. John Anderson. You may contact my supervisor at: 250-721-7799 and e-mail: [anderson@uvic.ca](mailto:anderson@uvic.ca). Or you may call the Associate Vice-President, Research: 250-472-4362.

As a participant, I understand the following:

- 1) This research project is studying the effects of sudden mother death on late adolescent females in terms of their self-identity choices;
- 2) I will be asked questions selected from two research tools designed by Research Psychologists in the area of identity and bereavement research and that I will be audio taped. I will be asked to attend one interview which may last from approximately 1.5 hours to 2 hours;
- 3) That my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at anytime, without explanation. I understand that participation in this study will not involve any negative consequences or harm for myself.
- 4) That any data collected in the study will remain confidential and recorded information (written notes or audiotapes) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at all times. Furthermore, I understand that my name will not be attached to any of the documentation, the data collected, or any published results. The only individuals who will have access to the data collected are the researcher, Cheryl McLoughlin, the researcher's Supervisor, Dr. John Anderson, and the committee members. Outside of the required interview my identity and anonymity will be completely protected and if I am seen outside in a public place by the researcher (Cheryl McLoughlin) will consider me to be a complete stranger and I will not be greeted or acknowledged in any fashion;

5) That the information collected from the documentation both written and audiotapes will be destroyed 12 months after the study is complete. Information from the documentation will appear in the researcher's thesis but I will not be identified within the thesis. If I withdraw from the study, the information collected to date will be destroyed immediately.

I understand all the information contained within this consent form.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Experimenter's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### Recruitment Letter

To Whom It May Concern:  
March 7, 2003

I am a graduate student in the Department of Psychological Foundations & Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria. I am researching the issue of Mother-Death in Adolescence and its' impact on women's choices about their own identity. To understand how this experience impacts women's choices, my thesis advisory committee has recommended I interview 5 women who have experienced the sudden death of their mother but not any individuals who have gone through this experience within the last 2 calendar years. If you are between the age of 19 – 30 years and willing to meet with me in a 1.5 to 2 hour interview please contact me at your earliest convenience. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and confidentiality and anonymity will be protected at all times. **Specifically after the interview, if I see you in a public place I will not initiate any contact and behave as though you are a complete stranger to me. Under no circumstances will your name appear on any data, documentation or completed research.**

At your request, I will send you a copy of the results or a summary of my work if interested. This research will add to the current literature and therefore potentially benefit many in the future. Participants in the study will receive a \$40.00 gift certificate to a healthcare or educational store of your choice. If interested, please contact me at 250-744-2627 (h) or through my numeric pager 250-388-2586. If I am not available to talk to you when you call, please leave your name and phone number and I will return your call as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Cheryl McLoughlin

**APPENDIX F****\$\$ 40.00 GIFT CERTIFICATE \$\$**

\*Redeemable at Win Thrift Stores\* Chapters\*Bolen's\* UVIC Bookstore\*

**Women's Research Study**

Your help is needed for a study on women's bereavement issues....

If you are between the age of 19 to 30 and have experienced "**the unexpected loss of your mother**" in your late adolescence I am interested in completing two research tools with questions designed by Research Psychologists in identity and bereavement...**BUT** the death **cannot be within the last 2 years**...as I am interested in the effects this experience has on women's identity choices.

**Approx. 2 Hours is required and you will receive a \$40.00 gift certificate for your time!**

**CALL 744-2627**

(Please leave message in private voicemail, refer to the "women's bereavement study" & your call will be returned by the researcher or page me at 388-2586 for more information)

This research is supervised by Dr. John Anderson (Dept. of Psych. Foundations & Leadership) and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of the Vice-President-Research 250-472-4362.