

**FATHER-LOSS: THE EFFECTS ON SUBSEQUENT  
INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS OF MALE CHILDREN**

by

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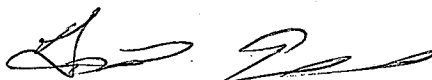
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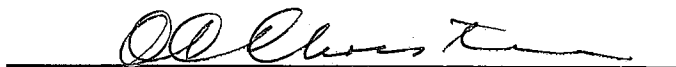
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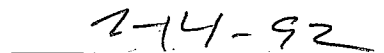


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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated with love to my mother, Linda Edwards Shelton, for all her support and encouragement in my graduate studies.

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## ABSTRACT

The long-term effects of the death of a father upon the surviving male children was the objective of this study. The major consequence studied was the effect of this relative's death on the relationship quality of the adult male's intimate relationships. It was expected that the surviving male child will have a lower perceived degree of intimacy and a higher expected degree of intimacy in their intimate relationships than males who have not lost their fathers to death. A sample of male adult volunteers between the ages of 18 - 30 years of age who lost their fathers to death between the ages of 6 - 16 (N=15) was surveyed. Another group of male adult volunteers between the ages of 18 - 30 who did not lose their fathers to death (N=15) was also surveyed. The individuals in the two groups responded to the PAIR Inventory (Schaefer & Olson, 1986). No significant differences were found in degree of perceived and expected levels of intimacy between the group with father loss and the group without such a loss. Further analyses and results were discussed with regard to implications for therapy and future research.



## Chapter I

The universal experience of death mandates that researchers study its effects on survivors (Bowlby, 1961; Paul, 1986; Seplowin & Seravalli, 1985; Strange, 1987). Paul (1986; 1982; 1965) contends that a direct relationship exists between family members' maladaptive responses to death of a loved one and the subsequent rigidity of family patterns. Parental loss is a disruption of one of the most significant relationships in a person's life, and is presumed to have some effect on the formation of later relationships (Hepworth, Dreyer, & Ryder, 1984). One particular area of concern in understanding family systems is the variable of father absence. Males who have been father absent often appear to have difficulty in forming lasting heterosexual relationships (Biller, 1970; Pettigrew, 1964; Winch, 1949). American culture, unlike others, places a high value on intimacy and, although not restricted to marriage, most get married to seek and maintain intimacy (Schaefer & Olson, 1981).

Many developmental theorists include intimacy as a vital ingredient in their hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954; Erickson, 1950; Sullivan, 1953). A few theoreticians combine these areas and assert a hypothetical intergenerational effect of grief upon survivors in family systems (Bowen, 1982; Friedman, 1977; Paul & Paul, 1982).

This study was an exploratory investigation of the relationship between the death of one's father and patterns of subsequent intimate relationships in male children. The purpose was to explore, test, and build theory in the field of family therapy. Family theorists and researchers identify a phenomenon wherein "nodal

events" of family life frequently give rise to relationship instability (Bowen, 1982; Friedman, 1977; Paul & Paul, 1982).

### Research Question

In this exploratory study, the question of the relationship between the death of one's father and the expected (ideal) versus the perceived (realized) degree of intimacy in subsequent relationships of the surviving male children was investigated. The purpose was to study a group of adult males who had experienced the death of their father by comparing subgroups: one group who had suffered the death of their father between the ages of 6 - 16 with another group of individuals who had not in order to determine whether differences in expected and realized degree of intimacy existed between the two groups.

### Problems to be studied

This study investigated four areas: the sequence and timing of the father's death, the perceived and expected degrees of intimacy in the respondent's intimate relationships, level of commitment in the respondent's past or present intimate relationship, and a summary of the meaning of the lost relationship.

The first major area of investigation was the sequence and timing of death in parental generations of the family of origin of those surveyed, specifically the father. All individuals who had experienced such a death were included in the sample.

The second major area was to investigate the degree to which the individual presently feels intimate in the various areas of relations (perceived), and the degree to which each partner would like to be intimate (expected). The data were used to

determine the male's perceived and expected degrees of intimacy in a past or present relationship as measured by PAIR (Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships).

A third major area of investigation was self-reported level of commitment to intimate relationships for father-loss and no-loss subjects in their present intimate relationship. Each subject rated his intimate relationship status as: not dating, casual dating, serious commitment.

A fourth major area of investigation was the meaning of the lost relationship with the respondent's father, specifically in regard to the loss of a male role model and its effect on his later intimate relationships.

#### The Theoretical Context and Rationale for Approach to Problem

The theoretical context of this investigation is family systems theory. Family systems theory provides a framework for the conceptual orientation of this study, as well as assesses the effects of death on the family system and subsequent intimate relationships (Bowen, 1982; Minuchin, 1974; Williamson, 1981; Winch, 1977).

Object relations theory and multigenerational family theory were also used in certain aspects of this study. From an object relations standpoint, one projects onto the individual with whom one is intimate certain important images from earlier relationships with parents (Nichols & Everett, 1986; Dicks, 1963). From the multigenerational perspective, mate selection can be explained in terms of individuals seeking to regain a lost parent through marrying a person who seems to embody some crucial attributes of the lost parental object. By replacing the missing parent, one strives to rebalance obligations and loyalties in the family ledger (Boszormenyi-Nagy

& Spark, 1973, Nichols & Everett, 1986). The stage theory of grief (Bowlby, 1960; Kubler-Ross, 1969; Lindemann, 1944) was used to understand the impact of death on the family system.

### Research Hypothesis

A lower perceived degree of intimacy and a higher expected degree of intimacy in the intimate relationship is more likely for males who have lost their fathers to death than males who have not lost their fathers to death as measured by PAIR - Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (Appendix E).

### Definitions

1. Father Loss: Loss of the father due to death when the male child was between the ages of 6 - 16.

2. Intimate Experience: A feeling of closeness or sharing with another in one or more of seven areas described by Schaefer and Olson (1981). The seven types of intimacy were: (1) emotional intimacy --- experiencing a closeness of feelings; (2) social intimacy --- the experience of having common friends and similarities in social networks; (3) intellectual intimacy---the experience of sharing ideas; (4) sexual intimacy---the experience of sharing general affection and/or sexual activity; (5) recreational intimacy --- shared experiences of interests in hobbies, mutual participation in sporting events; (6) spiritual intimacy --- the experience of showing ultimate concerns, a similar sense of meaning in life, and/or religious faiths, (7) aesthetic intimacy--the closeness that results from the experience of sharing beauty.

3. Intimate Relationship: An intimate relationship was defined as one in which an individual shares intimate experiences in several of the former areas (emotional, social, intellectual, sexual, recreational, spiritual, and aesthetic). There is the expectation that the experiences and relationship will persist over time (Olson, 1975; 1977; Schaefer & Olson, 1981).

4. Bereavement: Refers to the loss itself, to being robbed as it were of something valuable to oneself, and to being left sad and lonely (Nichols and Everett, 1986).

5. Grief: Pertains to the feelings engendered by the loss, the emotional reactions of the bereft person, including anger, hostility, fear, depression, despair, and others (Nichols and Everett, 1986). Used in the understanding as part of the larger process of mourning, which includes not only the emotional reactions of the person but also the total behavioral pattern exhibited by the survivor from the time of the loss onward (Bowlby, 1969).

6. Proband: Survivor of a deceased family member (Stephenson, 1985).

7. Nodal Events: Refers to "rites of passage" within the family life cycle (Friedman, 1985) such as weddings, births, deaths, and funerals.

8. Family of Origin: Indicates blood relatives of respondents.

### Assumptions

1. Those being surveyed would report an accurate date for the death of their father.

2. The variable of "intimacy" is a dyadic quality which could be reported by an individual.

3. Individuals would be able to rate the perceived and expected degree of intimacy in their past or present relationships. Finally, it was assumed that the Personal Assessment of Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Inventory accurately measures the construct "intimacy".

4. Those being surveyed were presently in an intimate relationship, or have been involved in an intimate relationship in the past three years.

#### Limitations

1. This study did not take into account any historical factors other than death which might also have had an impact on the intimate relationship.

2. Those being surveyed, who are reporting a past relationship, may not recall specific perceptions and expectations of their relationship.

#### Significance of the Problem and Justification for the Investigation

Should such a transgenerational relationship between death of one's father and subsequent intimate relationship patterns be observed in male children, it would have importance to the field of marital and family therapy. From a perspective of assessment, such a relationship might indicate the need for an early analysis of family of origin patterns and grief resolution when clients entered therapy (Strange, 1987). A number of studies suggest that father-absent boys have more difficulty in forming lasting heterosexual relationships, as well as peer relationships (Biller, 1970).

Different strategies or clinical interventions may be called for in response to a client

from a father-absent family. It is imperative to spell out more precisely the factors that lead a person with parental loss to choose one or another attitude toward future relationships (Hepworth, Dreyer, & Ryder, 1984). Information regarding "perceived" and "expected" intimacy in the intimate relationships of male children from father-loss families can provide a measure of their goals, needs, and perhaps, expectations in the relationship.

## Chapter II

### Review of Related Literature

In this chapter, the major literature involved with the subject of the death of one's father, the effects on male children surviving such a loss, and the intimate relationships of these males is reviewed. Systems theory forms the theoretical perspective of this study and provides the context of the review of literature and research related to the concepts being investigated. Death within the family is discussed in light of theories and research concerning grief and loss. Mate selection and the intergenerational effect of death upon a dyad are reviewed in terms of object relations theory. Finally, the three variables of the death of one's father, the male child's response, and intimacy within the male's relationships are discussed as they related to each other in theory and research.

#### Systems Theory: Father Loss, Male Children, and Intimacy

The most widely accepted definition of a system is that it is a series of elements arranged in some consistent and enduring relationship with each other (von Bertalanffy, 1968; Miller, 1965). The key to the definition is therefore the notion of consistency of relationships. The arrangement of elements is not random, but patterned, which is why the focus is on the way these elements are organized and on a description not only of the relationships themselves but of the organization of the whole (Steinglass, 1987). The key notions introduced in systems theory are wholeness, organization, and relationships. Within the whole, the concepts of roles, rules, boundaries, and hierarchies describe the functions of the parts. Communication



patterns range on a continuum from open (i.e., dynamic synergistic) to closed (i.e., rigid, dogmatic) (von Bertalanffy, 1968). Emotions are shared with the family on a similar continuum ranging from enmeshing (i.e., fused, overclose) to disengaging (i.e., separated, distant) (Strange, 1987). The family reacts to loss of a member in a corresponding way as the individual reacts to loss (Gelcer, 1983; Strange, 1987) with evidence of crisis (Hill, 1949; McCubbin & Patterson, 1982) and in stages as defined by Kubler-Ross (Gelcer, 1983).

#### System theory concepts

Systems theory concepts are discussed in this section and implications of these concepts are related to the system's reaction and accommodation to the occurrence of death. According to von Bertalanffy, the family system is composed of three properties: wholeness, relationship, and equifinality (von Bertalanffy, 1966). A system is a complex set of elements in interaction, thus, the elements of a system are not just the sum of the parts, but are interdependent through a process of feedback. Feedback in the form of communication maintains the system's functioning.

Although grief is defined as a phenomenon of the emotions, thought, and behavior of a single individual, it is also a phenomenon of relationships among survivors and between bereaved and lost. These are usually family relationships (Rosenblatt, 1983). The loss of a loved one by death brings a crisis that needs to be met with reorganization as the survivor works through the grief and begins to complete the process of mourning. Family relationships are altered by the death, and

additional accommodations and alterations are required in response to the loss (Nichols and Everett, 1986).

Gelcer (1983) proposed an interactional, systemic view of mourning through the analysis of two different families. In the case studies presented, she found that although death affects each individual differently, depending upon his or her relationship with the deceased, it continues to influence all family relations with equal powers. Furthermore, nonresolution of mourning permits a "ghost" to become an integral member of the family system. Despite the many differences between the families, the communalities may point to some wider generalizations. In both cases, according to Gelcer (1983), the children were unable to grasp the death of their parent, yet they were subjected to the same rules of conduct as adults:

"Paradoxically, their development was arrested at their level of maturity at their parents' death. Both families lost a parent of the same gender as the surviving children. The implications for gender disturbance in adolescence were indeed among the problems that were of concern upon admission. Academic underachievement is not uncommon in depressed, and in these cases, grieving children. 'Death is not easily tolerable, for it can breed shame.' An adolescent who lost a father stated: 'A child might lie about her parents being alive. I used to lie all the time. . . . I felt ashamed and embarrassed because I was different from everyone else. If I said he was dead, they would feel sorry for me. I couldn't stand that and would rather lie" (p. 512).

According to Friedman (1985), the family strives to fill the vacancy left by the death of the member. When individuals leave the system through death, the system may quickly replace the deceased. This new person in the system will replace the deceased in all the triangles. Expectations of the deceased's role and residues of problems of the past are encountered in the "replacement" scenario. As a homeostatic principle, replacement is utilized to maintain a balance within the system. Furthermore, the replacement is a function of grief, which Friedman (1985) defined as the "unworked out residue of the relationship that was lost." (p. 43). In effect, unresolved attachment makes it difficult to allow the deceased to finally "go". In a similar vein, Taggart (1980) affirmed the value of saying "good-bye" to his deceased father (Strange, 1987).

Using a systems analysis, Rosenblatt (1983) analyzed diaries of 19th century Americans to determine their experience with grief. The diaries contain many illustrations of the resistance of family systems to change after a loss, i.e., dreams and the sense of presence of the lost person, the attempt to communicate with the lost by means of a spirit medium, the attempt to retain a relationship with the lost through prayer to the lost or to God, the hope of being reunited with the lost, and the use of the wishes of the lost as a guide to action. A second family systems phenomenon reflected in the diaries was seeking substitutes for the lost, trying to maintain the system as it was while changing occupants of the role. The dynamics of family relationships, particularly between parents and children wrestling with the issue of substitution for the lost reflected another systems phenomenon, the interaction of

griefs. The grief of one family member may complicate the attempts of others to turn to that person for help and understanding. A final systems phenomenon illuminated by some of the diaries is the role of help in grief. Diarists seemed to benefit from providing support to others, which also helped them deal with their own grief (Rosenblatt, 1983).

According to Carter and McGoldrick (1980), the passages of the family life cycle are directed toward understanding shifting membership in the family over time, and the changing status of family members in relation to each other. Death, then, becomes part of the passages of the life cycle of the system and the means by which attachment and status are understood in family relations.

#### Father Absence and the effect on male children

The literature on the effects of parental loss on child development is plentiful. A history of parental loss has been associated with psychoneurosis (Gay & Tonge, 1967), suicide (Robins, et al, 1957), alcoholism and narcotic drug addiction (Bennehy, 1966), schizophrenia (Granville-Grossman, 1966), depressive illness (Hill & Price, 1967), anxiety reactions (Bowlby, 1962), sociopathic character and criminal behavior (Brown, 1966), poor employment record (Hall & Tonge, 1963), and failure in the Peace Corps. (Suedfeld, 1967). Many of these studies deal with loss from separation, divorce, or death without distinguishing among them (Jacobson & Ryder, 1969). Krinsky (1968) summarized his clinical material on the effects of bereavement at a young age as "the inability to let anyone else care," "shallow and meaningless relationships," and "the fear of letting anyone else get to know them." Jacobson and

Ryder (1969) point out that while parental divorce and separation are significant, parental death has not been demonstrated to be a factor in psychopathology regardless of the parent lost or the age that the loss occurred.

Most investigations on father absence have focused on its influence on personality development in male children. Much of this research arises from the psychoanalytic position that a male child deprived of a father will experience difficulty achieving necessary sex-role identification and, consequently, will develop behavior insufficiently masculine for appropriate adjustment (Atkinson & Ogston, 1974).

Biller (1970) points out that the father's presence is of crucial importance in the boy's sex role development. The boy learns to be masculine by identifying with the father and imitating his behavior. Hetherington (1966) also provided support that, relative to father-present children, sex-role identification problems were experienced by children if separated from their fathers prior to the age of five years, and less aggression was evident if separated while under four years of age. Biller (1969) found that father-absent 5 year-olds had significantly less masculine sex-role orientations and sex-role preferences than did father-present boys. However, other studies have failed to find a higher incidence of reminity or aggression among father absent boys (McCord, et al, 1962; Greenstein (1966). It is possible that increasing exposure to peers and adult males may facilitate later development of strong masculine identity, particularly as the influence of peers and extrafamilial contact becomes greater than material dominance (Covell & Tumbull, 1982).

In their study on the long term effects of father absence on sex typing and personal adjustment, Covell and Turnbull (1982) found that male college students with a history of father absence were neither less masculine nor more feminine than those from two-parent families. However, they did find that students who had experienced father absence prior to age 5 scored significantly lower than a late onset group (after age 5) on measures of self-esteem. They conclude that early disruptions in sex role caused by father absence can be overcome. However, father absence that occurs before a boy is age 5, may have lasting effects on the son's self-esteem and self-confidence.

Santrock (1977) maintained that it is not necessary for a father to be present in the home for the son to develop masculine sex-typed behaviors. In his study, preadolescent boys without fathers appeared to behave in a more masculine fashion than their father present counterparts. It was also found that boys from divorced families are more aggressive than boys from widowed homes, and that the later father absence occurs, the son is more likely to show aggression toward peers and family members.

#### Intimacy within a romantic relationship

'Intimacy' and intimate--from the latin words *intimus* (innermost) and *intimare* (to make the innermost known)-- can be used to refer to feelings, to verbal and nonverbal communication processes, to behaviors, to people's arrangements in space, to personality traits, to sexual activities, and to kinds of long-term relationships (Reis & Shaver. 1988). In a recent overview of intimacy research entitled 'Intimacy as the

proverbial elephant, Acitelli and Duck (1987) observe that 'It is a necessary and valuable part of the research enterprise that some researchers must feel some parts of the creature whilst other probe other areas. We will remain blind only if we fail to relate the different reports to one another or if we see them as exclusive or competitive rather than compatible or complementary' (pp.306-307). Montgomery (1984) emphasized that it is fortunate that we have a variety of perspectives on intimacy which contribute unique information.

Despite widespread interest in intimacy, there has been a lack of "serious" theoretical and research study of the topic (Wynne & Wynne, 1986). In an extensive review of the research literature on intimacy, Schaefer and Olson (1981) conclude that the field of marriage and family therapy has "barely paused" to define, clearly conceptualize, or validate the nature of intimacy. Part of the difficulty with the concept of intimacy is definitional. Schaefer and Olson (1981) propose a distinction between intimacy that is an "experience" limited in time and content, and intimacy that is a "relationship," which is said to exist when "an individual shares intimate experiences in several areas and there is the expectation that such experiences will recur and that the relationship will persist over time. . . . While intimate experiences are elusive and unpredictable phenomena that may occur spontaneously, an intimate relationship may take time, work, and effort to maintain."

In Wynne and Wynne's (1986) approach to the issue of definition. they conclude that it is not useful to equate intimacy loosely with such terms as closeness, warmth, love. or sexuality. Drawing on suggestions in the literature and their own

observations. Wynne and Wynne (1986) propose the following definition: "Intimacy is a subjective relational experience in which the core components are trusting self-disclosure to which the response is communicated empathy." They point out that self-disclosure alone does not necessarily generate intimacy. The key component is "the willingness to share, verbally or nonverbally, personal feelings, fantasies, and emotionally meaningful experiences and actions, positive or negative, with the expectation and trust that the other person will emotionally comprehend, accept what has been revealed, and will not betray or exploit this trust" (Wynne & Wynne, 1986). An intimate experience has not taken place, in their definition, until there is empathic feedback.

The repeatedly occurring concepts and issues of intimacy include: approach and avoidance motives related to intimacy, verbal and nonverbal disclosure of self-relevant information and feelings that in other kinds of interaction remain private or hidden, attentiveness and responsiveness on the part of an interaction partner (spouse, friend, therapist), validation of important aspects of one or both interaction partner's self concepts or identities, and feelings of being understood, cared for, and approved of (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Researchers and theorists use the intimacy concept in many different ways. In the following subsection, the components of the intimacy process will be considered in regard to existing theories and research.

Harry Stack Sullivan (1953) points out two salient points in regard to intimacy. First, the need for intimacy emerges between childhood and adolescence, when one's



closest peer relationships are likely to be with same-sex partners. According to Sullivan (1953), "Intimacy is that type of situation involving two people which permits validation of all components of personal worth." Intimacy is a collaboration in which both partners reveal themselves, and seek and express validation of each other's attributes and world views (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Secondly, the onset of puberty induces a wish to form a comparable bond with a member of the opposite sex, motivated by 'lustful needs' (Sullivan, 1953). He suggests that the different socialization and cultural experiences of females and males leave the two sexes ill-prepared to establish intimate relationships with each other. Research supports Sullivan's claim that intimacy becomes salient during preadolescence, primarily within the context of same-sex friendships. At that point in development, children's descriptions of friendship begin to emphasize sharing of intimate thoughts and feelings (Reis & Shaver, 1988).

Erik Erikson (1950, 1958), in an effort to conceptualize psychosocial development across the lifespan, used the term intimacy primarily to describe a quality of mature adult heterosexual relationships. He defined intimacy as a counterpointing and fusing of identities, and argued that it becomes a major developmental issue in early adulthood, after the establishment of a secure identity and before attainment of 'generativity'. Erikson observed that genuine commitment to an adult romantic relationship requires the existence of relatively stable and self-acknowledged identities. Research based on interviews and questionnaires generally supports Erikson's claim

that identity precedes intimacy, although this pattern is typically more common for men than women (Reis & Shaver, 1988).

Carl Rogers (1961) put emphasis on the role of unconditional positive regard in fostering open communication, intimacy, lowered defensiveness, and enhanced self-esteem. Rogers originally applied these concepts to clients and therapists, and parents and children, but he later extended his thinking to the marriage (Rogers, 1972), arguing that similar processes are evident in all close relationships. According to Rogers, unconditional positive regard (empathic, nonjudgemental, supportive listening) encourages a person to become more self-accepting and better integrated, which in turn facilitates interpersonal openness and trust.

Although an intimate experience feels "special" at a specific time, the actual context and content may be limited to one of several realms, such as sexual, intellectual, esthetics, spiritual, or recreational (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). "Although intimacy may recur more reliably in enduring, multidimensional relationships, it also is found in relationships that are brief and unidimensional. Intimacy occurs surprisingly often in encounters with relative strangers. Such highly sporadic, intimate disclosures "in one-time only" relationships seem possible because of the unlikelihood of a further relationship and the attendant opportunities for betrayal" (Wynne & Wynne, 1986).

### The Effects of Death

#### Definition of Grief and mourning

Gelcer (1983), who has produced theoretical work related to a systems theory of grief, points out that researchers and clinicians seem to have taken the easy route of

studying one unit of the family structure at a time rather than tackling the whole system. Studies of children's reactions to death highlight the importance of the family and larger social systems for providing education and support during the mourning process.

A theoretical perspective on grief can incorporate almost any concept that touches human emotion, behavior, or cognition (Rosenblatt, 1983). Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917/1973) provided the origin for the modern theories of grief and its effects. In his study on loss by death, Freud explained that the goal of their work of grieving was to attain a state at which the ego might become free and uninhibited again. Grieving is work because it demands energy, effort, and the ability to bear pain. Reality must be viewed in a different way after grief is finished. The end state of grieving is to be able to live one's life as though the lost person no longer exists as a human being (Strange, 1989).

Paul (1986) understood mourning as the total range of and configuration of responses to a major loss, or death. "Mourning includes physical behavior, both formal and spontaneous, and psychological processes both observable and covert, which are set in motion by loss" (p. 14). Grief, according to Paul (1986), is a more restricted term applied to the subjective state of mourning and excludes all the ritualistic and behavioral elements of mourning. Grief usually consists of such feelings as helplessness, anger, despair, and bewilderment, which overlap and vary in intensity from person to person as well as within any one person during the mourning process. Bowlby (1961) likewise understood grief to be the train of subjective states

attending mourning succeeding a significant loss. He believed grief to be a particular combination of anxiety, anger, and despair following the experience of what is feared to be irretrievable loss (Bowlby, 1961).

Seplowin and Seravalli (1985) defined grief in terms of the totality of the human emotional response to loss. Furthermore, they viewed the grief as expanding beyond the individual to include the culture and social environment around him. They indicated that within an optimum range of reaction, the experience of the loss of someone close is followed by healing with peace, with a reorganization of the bereaved's social bonds. At the same time, this optimum range may also include instinctual survival efforts in the "proband", or survivor of a deceased person (Stephenson, 1985). Furthermore, the deceased may symbolize ideals, qualities, or special capacities to the griever. Thus, the death may bring a change in self-definition, status, role, or life-style in accord with the loss of that special symbolization of the deceased. The dead person may become a patent symbol of the end of a phase or period in the proband's life. The origins of rituals surrounding grief were, from earliest times, these writers feel, focused not only upon the entry of the deceased to a new spiritual and physical abode, but also the entry of the survivors into altered and reorganized relational existence. Thus, for these theorists, the recognition of death becomes a means by which the alteration of social contacts of the survivors is recognized (Seplowin and Seravelli, 1985: Stephenson, 1985).

Peretz (1970) defined a typology of grief which included (a) it normal" grief; (b) anticipatory grief; (c) inhibited, absent, and delayed grief; (d) chronic grief

(perpetual mourning); (e) depression; (f) hypochondriasis and exacerbation of preexistent somatic conditions; (g) development of medical symptoms and illness; (h) psychophysiologic reactions; (i) acting-out (e.g., psychopathic behavior, drugs, promiscuity); and (j) specific neurotic and psychotic states.

### Stage theory of grief

Rosenblatt (1983) indicated stage theory is the logical extension to the beginning work done by Lindemann (1944) and Gorer (1967) in that, while compatible with the concept of arrested grieving, stage theory implies process rather than stasis. Freud (1917/1973) defined a grief process and even specified an eventual normal outcome, but did not describe a single one-directional path for grief resolution. Simple stage theory would define specific points in grief and a process which moves from one stage to another without reversals. Any reversals or stagnancy in process would be defined as pathology (Strange, 1987).

Generally, stage theories of grief (Bowlby, 1961; Kubler-Ross, 1969) agreed in conceiving grief as beginning with a period of denial and/or numbness, followed by a second stage of intense emotion and painful grieving, to be concluded with a final resolution. Spiegel (1977) expounded on the breaking of boundaries in families through death by citing Bowlby's stage theory. In his analysis, the first stage is the "protest" period observed as shock and need for control culminating with the funeral and the departure of the relatives. The second phase is the "regressive" period, also described as "disorganized", which lasts from four to ten weeks. The final stage of grief is the "reorganization" (or "adaptation"), only to be resolved in six months to a

year afterward. For Bowlby (1961), it is important to note that the major effects of grief are felt within the first twelve months after a loss.

Kubler-Ross (1969) elaborated on five stages of grief: (a) denial and isolation; (b) anger; (c) bargaining; (d) depression; and (e) acceptance. The last stage of acceptance is roughly equivalent the phase Bowlby (1961) considered "reorganization". According to Spiegel (1977), under pathological conditions, a grieving person may not progress beyond one of the first three stages of grief. Such a constipation in process leads to the grief not being allowed to run its course, and thus, the person is "stuck".

Lindemann's (1944) work is the primary guide in the following "stage" description, but the work of Oates (1955) and Nichols and Everett's (1986) observations and experiences with bereft individuals and families also are included.

1. The initial reaction to the loss or to being informed of the loss is one of shock, followed by numbness. The initial reaction may last from a day to several days, depending on the circumstances of the loss.

2. Next, a period of denial typically is evident. Expressions such as the following are frequently heard, "I don't believe it," "It can't be true. " The denial is generally accompanied by a range of agitated behaviors, including difficulties in settling down physically and problems in sleeping.

3. Surprising emotional reaction may be forthcoming as the denial breaks down and the next stage begins. Not only the survivor but also others around that person may be shocked and upset by the emotional reactions that erupt. Anger, rage,

bitterness all may pour out in alternating patterns that seem beyond the boundaries of reason.

4. Although this stage does not occur in the same way for all survivors, it is common for the person to think about the events of death over and over. Sometimes they spend a considerable amount of time trying to determine whether they could have done anything to prevent the death, or make the deceased more comfortable.

5. Eventually, with most survivors, there comes a time in which the loss has been accepted and much of their living is done in the present.

#### Effects of parental loss

Although bereaved children and adults manifest many similar reactions, according to Krupnick and Solomon (1987), there are clear differences between them in the time frame and overt process of grieving. Such differences place children at substantially greater psychological risk than adults after the death of a parent. Denying that a death occurred, for example, makes it difficult for a child to deal with and through feelings of loss. Problematic feelings and behaviors associated with the bereavement may emerge months or even years later as a child reworks his or her grief (Krupnick and Solomon, 1987).

According to Krupnick and Solomon (1987), one cannot really draw firm conclusions about the long-term consequences of childhood or adolescent loss. For the intermediate term, however, it appears that early bereavement greatly increases the likelihood of depression, school dysfunction, and delinquency. Factors that appear to increase the risk of psychological morbidity following parental loss during childhood

or adolescence include the following: loss before the age of five years or during early adolescence; loss of mother for girls under age eleven and loss of father for adolescent boys; psychological difficulties in the child antedating the death (the more severe the preexisting psychopathology, the greater the risk); problematic relationship with the deceased before the death; emotionally vulnerable surviving parent who becomes overly dependent on the child; inadequate family or community supports or a parent who is unable to make use of an available support system; an unstable, inconsistent environment, including multiple shifts in caretakers and disruption of familiar routines; parental remarriage if a negative relationship develops between the child and the stepparent; lack of prior knowledge about death; and experience of parent suicide or homicide (Krupnick and Solomon, 1987). One type of hidden internal reaction to death, which occurs especially in children who lost a parent, according to Paul (1986), is the nurturance of a grudge. Grudges usually are ambivalent in nature, being both expressed toward the lost figure and at the same time being deflected back onto the self and spiralling from the image of the deceased to the self over time.

It should be obvious at this point that the process of mourning which includes grief is a most complex linear and recursive sequence of internal states and external behaviors which words cannot adequately describe. Thus, the references are at best spotty, raising more question than can be answered. The grief process, according to Paul (1986), is a vital intergenerational entity which when considered from a combined individual/family perspective can be regarded as a base for a reconsideration of the array of different affective states.



### Object Relations Theory: Effects on Future Relationships

From an object relations standpoint, one projects onto the individual with whom one is intimate certain important images from earlier relationships with parents (Nichols & Everett, 1986). The concept of object relations theory has been referred to as the bridge between individual systems and the family system (Slipp, 1984). In broad terms, object-relations theory attempts to deal with certain aspects of human relatedness, development, and motivation from infancy onward (Nichols, 1988).

Guntrip (1969) has described object relations in terms of our need to retain our experience in order to maintain continuity with the past and thus to have a basis for present functioning and relating. We do this by carrying things in our minds as either memories or internal objects. Good objects and experiences are carried as memories. Bad object situations are handled differently. A person whom we need becomes a bad object by ceasing to love us, disappearing, or dying, or doing something else that we experience as frustration or rejection. Linked to the bad object, we continue to feel deprived and unhappy and have a temptation to project the bad object back onto someone in the external world.

Two of the more important basic processes in object relations are introjection and projection. In the act of introjection the person transposes objects and their intrinsic qualities from the outside to inside his psyche. In projection, one casts out undesired parts or qualities of oneself and places them onto another person or persons in the external world (Nichols, 1988).

There are two major patterns of introjection. One is the pattern of parental introjection in which we form libidinal attachments and make introjects from parental figures. These attachments pertain to maternal as well as paternal figures. Sonne and Swirsky (1981) have emphasized the importance for the infant of having the father as a love object. The child is required to deal with an awareness of different genders and to attempt to locate itself in relation to the parents in the marital dyad.

Theorists assert that mate selection are related to antecedent childhood object relations (Dicks, 1963). The death of figures who established the original object relations may have profound effects on the child now become adult (Strange, 1987). Adult reactions to antecedent childhood bereavement have been researched since the 1930's (Bowlby, 1960). Leader (1978) has found in case studies that his clients who felt abandoned by parent(s) in childhood tended to reproduce these destructive relationships in their marriage. The link between the childhood trauma of parental death and later psychological pathology have included such research targets as schizophrenia, depression, and juvenile delinquency (Barry, 1949; Birchtnell, 1972).

### Transgenerational Family Theory

Transgenerational approaches to family therapy have grown out of the work of such pioneers as Murray Bowen, Ivan BoszormenyiNagy, James Framo, Norman Paul, and Donald Williamson. One of the theoretical influences in most transgenerational theories is that of the object relations concepts discussed earlier (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1986).

During his clinical studies at the National Institute of Mental Health, Murray Bowen (1960) noticed a lack of ego boundaries between the schizophrenic patient and at least one other family member (usually the mother). Often one person would speak for the other, and anxiety was transmitted easily from one family member to the other.

Bowen's observations in these clinical studies led to theoretical concepts that explain schizophrenia and other disorders in terms of family dynamics. Bowen claims that the health of each family member is a function of his or her degree of differentiation. The higher the level of one's differentiation of self, the more distinguishable are his or her emotional and intellectual systems (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1986).

A knowledge of triangles is particularly useful in the conduct of therapy, since, according to Bowen (1982), the triangle is the basic building block of an emotional system. When anxiety increases between two family members, a vulnerable third person becomes involved in the emotional issues. This "triangling" of the third person ultimately reduces the anxiety level (Kerr, 1988).

Continued indifferentiation in the family may result in marital conflict, dysfunction in one spouse, or impairment of one or more children (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1986). Bowen (1978) contends that this impairment from undifferentiation may be transmitted across multiple generations, with generations of the most undifferentiated offspring marrying partners with similar levels of undifferentiation. The eventual result is, according to Bowen, a schizophrenic offspring (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1986).

According to Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy (1973), invisible, often unconscious loyalties or bonds across generations greatly influence present behavior. Loyalties arise from the basic human concern for fairness and result in unconscious "ledgers" of what has been given and what is owed. One accumulates merit by the extent to which he or she "balances the ledger" (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1986).

Boszormenyi-Nagy's concept of unconscious legacy obligations provides an interesting rationale for a variety of maladaptive behaviors. For example, an abused child may grow up to balance his or her ledger in the only way he or she knows how: by becoming an abusive parent (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1986).

Norman Paul believes that the feelings family members most often withhold are those associated with grief. He claims that there is a direct relationship between family members' maladaptive responses to death of a loved one and the subsequent rigidity of family patterns (Paul, 1974). Paul believes that the family tends to return to a "pathological stable equilibrium" when grief is not appropriately expressed (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1986)

#### The Three Variables: Theory and Research

There have been few studies that describe the effects of a person's mourning on his or her relationships with other people, particularly family members, and especially its effect on the pattern of intimate relationships after the death of a parent (Kaltreider, Becker, & Horowitz, 1984). Although the death of a relative is listed as a major stressor in the family life cycle, relatively little attention has been focused on the effect on family relationships of resolution or nonresolution of mourning for an

adult relative (Guttman, 1991). For most adults, the long-term partner is the person to whom one turns for the fulfillment of one's intimate needs, including love, understanding, and support. Although many couples fail to fulfill these needs, a substantial number establishes long-standing, trusting relationships (Lewis, Gossett, & Phillips, 1976).

The effects of loss on family members has been explored from a transgenerational perspective. Bowen (1982) included a theoretical basis for the coincidence of death within the system, disruption of the dyadic subsystem, and the level of emotional connectedness of the system. He described families as reacting to death of a family member with an "emotional shock wave" that may result months or even years after the death of a significant family member. From Bowen's perspective, a fused family system is more reactive to such a disturbance than is an individuated system. He identified a shock wave in connection with the death of an important child or the head of the household. Death is operated through an underground network of family emotional dependency. This dependency is typically accompanied by participant denial. Often in these families, in Bowen's terms, fusion of emotions is high and is subject to dysfunction. Symptoms can include, according to Bowen, a full range of ailments from physical illness (e.g., colds, infections, diabetes) to emotional difficulties (e.g., depression, phobias, psychosis) including social dysfunctions such as business and school failures, drinking, accidents, and a full range of behavioral disorders. This emotional shock wave could also initiate the development of ambivalence or disruption of intimacy between marital partners (Bowen, 1982).

In their study on the effects of parental loss on the first few years of marriage, Jacobson and Ryder (1969) found that about one out of five couples in their study population drawn from the community had experienced a death of a parent prior to marriage. They found a general relationship between the ability to sustain intimacy and the age at loss although not with the sex of the parent lost. That is, regardless of the sex of the spouse or of the parent lost, the scores for marriage closeness were significantly higher for those who lost a parent after age 12 than for those whose loss was between birth and age 12. Jacobson and Ryder (1969) go on to suggest that his or her fears that the remaining parent will die and he or she will be left totally abandoned and helpless are buffered by already developed independent skills and a network of peer relations and institutions. Guilt and anger at being left may be mitigated if the relationship prior to loss was reasonable and if the loss did not take place after chronic family discontent as it does in divorce. In short, the adolescent has social and developmental means, not available to children of younger ages, of handling some of the repercussions that follow the loss of a parent (Jacobson and Ryder, 1969).

Hepworth, Ryder, and Dreyer's (1984) study on the effects of parental loss on the formation of intimate relationships supports the general clinical conviction that loss of a parent affects later intimate relationships. Persons who lose a parent by death in late adolescence tend, as predicted, to move into subsequent intimate relationships more quickly or more slowly than those who have not incurred parental loss. Their results also suggest that avoiding intimate relationships is the more likely of the two patterns.

Interview data from the undergraduate sample in Hepworth et al (1984) also illustrate the extreme patterns of courtship pace for person with parental death.

Case 155: "Relationships break down quickly. You have to have best foot forward, take your time and know what you're getting into."

Case 217: "If there's anything there, it would be the pace of the relationship. If my mother hadn't died, it might have taken us longer. We had to get together and make or break the relationship . . . the death was good for us, in a strange sort of way."

These results of great variability of death-loss persons for courtship pace are congruent with predictions arising from psychoanalytic, Eriksonian, and family system orientations. Results were also consistent with earlier finding by Jacobson and Ryder (1969).

Although much anterospective research has studied the loss of a parent resulting in a child's later pathology, specifically the effects of father loss on the development of male children, research is sparse on the effects of father loss on later intimate relationships of male children. Parental loss is a great disruption of one of the most significant relationships in a person's life, and therefore is presumed to have some effect on the formation of later intimate relationships (Hepworth, Ryder, & Dreyer, 1984). This loss may require modifications in the parent-child relationship and perhaps in the meaning of intimacy. For Moos and Moos (1983), the breaking of the parental bond is most traumatic in that for adult children it represents the longest of intimate relationships and the prototype of human attachment.

### Summary

The review of literature has summarized previous studies on father loss, grief, and intimate relationships of male children. Each of these studies has been viewed and analyzed from a family systems perspective and has been supported by other related theories. Significant literature on each of the three subjects has been included, with the observation that little theory and research has focused on the possible relationship between father loss, grief, and intimate relationships of male children.

The sole hypothesis of this exploratory study can therefore be understood as evolving out of this review of the literature. The experience of death (Freud, 1917/1973; Freud & Breuer, 1893/1964; Kubler-Ross, 1969) has a tremendous impact on the system of the family (Bowen, 1982, Minuchin, 1974). Male children who have lost their father's to death are especially affected by such stressors (Atkinson & Ogoston, 1974, Biller, 1970-. Covell & Turnbull, 1982); Drake & McDougall, 1977; Santrock. 1975/1977). Male children who have suffered the death of their father will have a lower perceived degree of intimacy and a higher expected degree of intimacy in their intimate relationships than those males who have not suffered the death of their father (Biller, 1970; Bowen, 1982; Drake & McDougall, 1977; Hepworth, Ryder, & Dreyer, 1984; Jacobson & Ryder, 1969).



## Chapter III

### Methodology

The procedures for this study are reviewed in this chapter and information concerning the hypothesis, research design, study population, data collection procedure, instrumentation, and statistical analysis is presented.

#### Summary of Procedure

The subjects surveyed responded to an initial questionnaire requesting dates of the death of one's father. A second instrument was used to ask those being surveyed to report one's perceived and expected degrees of intimacy in a relationship in the last three years. A third instrument was used to determine the level of commitment for father-loss and no-loss respondents in their present intimate relationship: not dating, casual dating, serious commitment. The father-loss sample was also given a fourth, brief instrument to assess the meaning of the loss for the subject.

According to the hypothesis, respondents who reported the death of their father between the ages of 6 - 16 would have a lower perceived degree of intimacy and a higher expected degree of intimacy in the relationship than those who reported no father loss between the ages of 6 - 16. The sample was taken from an undergraduate population at The University of Arizona.

### Restatement of the Hypothesis

#### The null hypothesis.

For those studied, the male population mean for perceived and expected intimacy is the same for those who have experienced the death of their father as for those who have not experienced the death of their father.

Ho:  $\bar{X}$  (intimacy score / father-loss)

minus  $\bar{X}$  (intimacy score / no father-loss) equals zero or

Ho:  $\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 = 0$

#### The alternate hypothesis.

For those studied, the male population mean for perceived intimacy will be lower and the expected mean will be higher for those who experienced the death of their father as for those who have not experienced the death of their father.

Ha:  $\bar{X}$  (intimacy score / father-loss)

minus  $\bar{X}$  (intimacy score / no father-loss)

is greater than zero or

Ha:  $\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 > 0$

### Research design

This study used a retrospective, pre-experimental, survey design to explore the relationship between perceived and expected degree of intimacy of the male when the death of one's father had occurred between the ages of 6 - 16. Intimacy served as the predictor variable and was operationally defined as the subjects' score on the PAIR Inventory (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). Father loss was the criterion variable.

### Subjects

The population from which the sample was drawn was composed of undergraduate students at The University of Arizona, and who volunteered to participate in this study. The total sample size was 30 adults, with 15 of these undergraduate students reporting the death of their father. Characteristics of the sample in terms of age, ethnicity, and educational background are reported in this study.

### Instrumentation

Subjects were asked to recall important facts and dates of their relationships, as well as to complete a brief instrument to assess the individuals perceived and expected degree of intimacy.

The first instrument was a record of demographic information about the participant and the individual's memory of the family's past related to family events within its life cycle (Appendix B).

The second instrument, PAIR, was a 36-item, two page, self report instrument that describes how each participant views the intimate relationship as it is now and how each would like it to be on five types of intimacy: emotional, social, sexual, intellectual, and recreational (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). PAIR provides 5 possible choices in responding to each item ranging from 0 to 4, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (Appendix E).

The third instrument was a self-reported level of commitment for father-loss and no-loss participants in their present intimate relationship: not dating, casual dating, serious commitment (Appendix C).

The fourth instrument, which the researcher developed specifically for this study, given to only the father-loss sample, was an examination of the meaning of the loss for the respondent, which was completed in written form (Appendix D).

#### Validity and Reliability of Instruments

For the PAIR, statements were solicited from family professionals, lay groups, and graduates about intimacy in general and the seven kinds of intimacy identified by Olson (1977): Emotional Intimacy; Social Intimacy; Intellectual Intimacy; Sexual Intimacy; Recreational Intimacy; Spiritual Intimacy; and Aesthetic Intimacy. These statements were transformed into 350 potential items. Of these, 113 were selected that were conceptually related, clear, and appropriate to the categories. After a pilot study, 10 items were selected for each of the scales according to their ability to meet the following criteria: 1) not everyone or almost everyone should answer the item the same way; 2) the item should correlate higher with its own scale than with other scales; 3) factor analysis should discover the best items in each scale; and 4) an equal number of items can be found that are positively and negatively scored for each scale. Another sample was tested (Schaefer & Olson, 1986).

Two scales did not produce a sufficient number of reliable items: aesthetic intimacy and spiritual intimacy. The final PAIR has six items for each of the five scales, plus another six items that reveal the tendency to try to make an exaggerated

good impression from Edmunds Conventionality Scale (1967). Six scores are reported. A single "total" score would be meaningless (Schaefer & Olson, 1986).

Normative data on the PAIR were collected for 192 couples who had been married between one and 37 years ( $\bar{x}$  length of marriage = 11.8,  $SD = 8.3$ ), ranging in age from 21 to 60-years-old ( $\bar{x}$  Age = 35.3,  $SD = 8.6$ ), with 9% having been formerly married, and 55% having more than a high school education ( $\bar{x}$  years of education = 14.1,  $SD = 2.2$ ). There was a fairly representative population of married individuals who had experienced their relationship over an extended period of time and who also had represented couples across a wide range of ages. The usual college dating relationship, which was represented in this study, was not used to meet their criteria (Schaefer & Olson, 1981).

Using a split-half method of analysis, internal consistencies were computed for each of the six scales using the Cronbach's Alpha. The internal consistencies ranged from .70 for intellectual or recreational intimacy to .77 for sexual intimacy. No test-retest reliability is reported.

The correlation between PAIR scores and other test scores was significant, and on one occasion exceptional. It was the author's hypothesis that those couples who receive high scores on the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale should also have high perceived scores on the PAIR, in that the tendency to describe one's relationship as presently being intimate is presumed to be associated with the tendency to be maritally adjusted. The Social Intimacy subscale correlated .98 with the couple scores on the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale. Every PAIR subscale correlates

significantly in the positive direction with the cohesion and expressiveness scales on the Moos Family Environment Scale. Both the Control and Conflict Scales of the FES have significant negative correlations for the PAIR's Emotional, Intellectual, and Recreational Scale. Eighteen out of the 20 PAIR-Scale-by-Moos Scale correlations proved to be significant for the hypothesis that presumed positive and negative correlations (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). The best scale for predicting other marital questionnaire scores is the scale for Emotional Intimacy (Schaefer & Olson, 1986).

The instruments assessing level of commitment and the meaning of the loss for the subject have face validity.

#### Administration of the Data Collection Schedule

PAIR is a paper-and-pencil inventory in which the respondent indicates on a five-point scale his degree of agreement with each of 36 items. The instrument is hand-scored. All data were collected from undergraduate students enrolled at The University of Arizona during January to May, 1992. Prior to conducting the research, the researcher provided a consent form (Appendix A), which stressed that student participation in this data collection was entirely voluntary, and that any concerns about the study could be directed to the Human Subject's Committee at the University of Arizona. The researcher provided copies of the four instruments to enlist all the students of eligible age to participate. The researcher gathered the data from the respondents. During the data gathering session for each of the groups, father-loss and no-loss, the researcher ensured that the respondents completed the instrument.

The collection of data had the dual purpose of serving as the basis of research as well as a foundation for assessment and intervention in marital or family therapy.

#### Instrument Scoring

The individual items and scoring are given below. The absolute range of scores is 0 to 96.

#### Procedures for Data Analysis

The data analyzed came from a sample that was divided into two groups: (a) "father loss" and (b) "no-father loss" groups. The data from each respondent were analyzed to determine the perceived and expected degree of intimacy in their relationships. Those respondents from father-loss families were included in the first group. Those respondents from father-present families were included in the second group. Each group had two different sets of the data with group means for intimacy.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

This study investigated the relationship between father-loss and its effect on the future intimate relationships of the surviving male children. The method of this study was to survey 15 adult males, ages 18-30, who had experienced the death of their father when the subject was between the ages of six and sixteen, and compare them to a group of adult males who had not suffered the death of their father. The object of the investigation was to determine whether the former group reported lower levels of perceived intimacy and higher levels of expected intimacy than the latter group.

The first measure used was a demographic data gathering instrument locating approximate date of father's death for the father loss group. The second measure utilized an accounting of the level of commitment in their present intimate relationship. The third measure was a description of the meaning of the lost relationship with the subject's father, specifically in regard to the loss of a male role model and its effect on their later intimate relationships. The final measure was an assessment of the individuals perceived and expected degree of intimacy in their relationship. Permission to use the PAIR Inventory was included in Appendix F.

The sample size of the father loss group was 15, and was composed of undergraduate students at The University of Arizona during the Spring of 1992. A demographic profile is shown in Table 1. The sample was composed of unmarried males between the ages of 18-30 who lost their father's to death between the ages of six and sixteen. The median age of the sample was 24 years old. The median age at



which the sample lost their father to death was 13 years old. One hundred percent of the sample lost their father after the age of 9 years old.

Table 1

Demographic Data about Sample

Variable	Father-Loss	No-Loss
Average Age	24	24
Age at Loss	13	N/A

The sample size of the no-loss group was also 15, and was composed of undergraduate and graduate students at The University of Arizona. The median age of the sample was 24 years of age.

The Hypothesis

The hypothesis took its direction from the theory (Bowen, 1982) that when there is a death of a relative, it sends a shock wave through the family system, which causes disruptions and changes months and even years after the death. No research has focused solely on the death of a father and the relationship between the two variables of male children and later intimate relationships.

The hypothesis stated that respondents who reported the death of their father when the surviving male child was between the ages of six and sixteen would have a lower perceived degree of intimacy and a higher expected degree of intimacy in their intimate relationship than adult males who had not lost their father to death during the ages of six and sixteen.

The null hypothesis stated that the mean scores for perceived and expected degrees of intimacy would be the same for both groups. The alternate hypothesis was that the mean scores for perceived degree of intimacy would be lower and the expected degree of intimacy (as measured by the PAIR Inventory) would be higher for the father-loss group.

The results of this study indicated that the group means for perceived and expected degrees of intimacy were so similar as to fail to reject the null hypothesis. The mean scores from the perceived and expected levels of intimacy as reported by both groups are reported in Table 2. Five different scores are reported for the five types of intimacy as measured by the PAIR. The absolute range of scores is 0 to 96.

Table 2

Perceived and Expected levels of Intimacy as Measured by PAIR

Range: 0 -96

	<u>Father-Loss</u>	<u>No-Loss</u>	<u>Father-Loss</u>	<u>No-Loss</u>
Emotional	68	58	92	87
Social	62	61	76	70
Sexual	74	62	90	82
Intellectual	64	59	86	82
Recreational	83	70	84	80

Except for Social Intimacy and Conventionality, the average perceived score (non-clinical sample of 384 individuals), as reported by Schaefer and Olson (1981), was between 42 and 58 for each scale. The average score for Social Intimacy was

somewhat higher ( $x = 61$ ), and for the conventionality was somewhat lower ( $x = 38$ ). The average expected scores ranged between 80 and 86. The conventionality score indicates the extent to which an individual is responding to PAIR in a socially desirable fashion. The higher the conventionality score, the more the individual is responding in a socially desirable way.

Due to the small sample size, there were no significant differences between perceived and expected degrees of intimacy for the father-loss groups. However, if there were a larger sample size, there would probably be a significant different difference due to the large discrepancy in perceived and expected intimacy within the two groups.

Scores on the PAIR are not indicators of "good" relationships or "bad" relationships in that high scores are necessarily always desired. The unique value of the perceived versus expected scores on PAIR is that each individual decides for themselves what is "good" or "ideal" for them. This is indicated by their discrepancy between perceived and expected.

#### Additional Findings

The data relating to the respondent's level of commitment in their present intimate relationship are reported in Table 3. The respondent's were asked in the instrument included in Appendix C to indicate the level of commitment that best described their present situation (Not dating, casual dating, or serious commitment).

Table 3

Commitment to Present Intimate Relationship (in percent)

Commitment	Death-Loss (N=15)	No-Loss (N=15)
Not Dating	20.0	26.6
Casual Dating	53.3	53.3
<u>Serious Commitment</u>	<u>26.6</u>	<u>20.2</u>

Based on a study by Hepworth et al (1984), it was hypothesized that young adults with parental loss tended to exhibit one of two patterns: avoidance of intimacy, or accelerated courtship. Hepworth et al, found that persons with parental death exhibited both of these described patterns, but tended as a group to be more hesitant about intimate relationships. The data here is not consistent with that hypothesis. The father-loss group was almost identical to the no-loss group. The most frequent response was "casual dating," which made up 53% of the responses. For the father-loss group, "not dating" was the next most frequent response or 26% of the responses. The no-loss group reported "serious commitment" as the next most frequent response. The young age of the respondent's might account for the this ranking, since many are at the age when casually dating is popular.

Qualitative findings are supported by essays that include analysis of how the loss of a male role model affected the respondent's later intimate relationships (Appendix D). The following statements illustrate the effect of father-loss on later intimate relationships that are suggested by the statistical results.

S.A: "I expect intimate relationships to be honest and close, which they usually aren't. I don't feel anyone stays together anymore in this day and age forever. In intimate relationships (love), I think the other person will at some point do something to hurt me, and I expect it. Maybe I just haven't found the right person. Forever love is just for movies."

S.S.: "I think my father's death affects all my intimate relationships, not just intimate ones. Any relationships that I'm in, whether the person is a friend, acquaintance, or lover, the knowledge that this person's attention, love or affection is only temporary is there in the background and probably biases most of my behavior. I'm not really sure what people mean when they say they feel close to someone. For me, all living and interacting with others is a preparation for the inevitable separation which will come, whether through death or attrition."

J.N.: "I think that the loss of my father has had a strong affect on my intimate relationships. Every relationship I've had during my life (2) has been a serious commitment and a break up sets me back for months. I usually have a hard time in noncommittal relationships.

D.G.: "I grieved my father for about 7 years. It started over a year after his death, and ended about 8 months ago, when I had to return to the funeral home. I had a very hard time there (the first time since his funeral), but I came away with a great sense of comfort and peace, the I had not felt since his death."

### Summary

This research examined the relationship between father-loss and its effect on later intimate relationships of the surviving male children. The null hypothesis, that there was equality of group means between subject's who had lost a father and those who had not, was not rejected. Father-loss group means for perceived and expected levels of intimacy were higher than the no-loss group. In regard to level of commitment in the subject's intimate relationships, responses were almost identical between the two groups. Qualitative findings revealed the value in further study of the role of the father's death in all facets of the surviving male's life.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This exploratory research focused on evaluation of an aspect of transgenerational theory in the field of marriage and family therapy. The relationship between father loss and its effect on heterosexual intimate relationships of the surviving male children was studied.

This study examined the relationship between two groups of undergraduate students at The University of Arizona. The father loss group (N=15) reported the death of their father between the subjects age of six and sixteen. The no loss group (N=15) did not report the death of their father. Both groups were instructed to rate the perceived and expected degrees of intimacy in their past or present intimate relationship. A 36-item scale of intimacy in relationships was used to measure this variable (Schaefer and Olson, 1981).

The group means of the perceived and expected degrees of intimacy scores were compared. The null hypothesis was that the two group means would be equal. The alternate hypothesis was that the father loss group would have a lower perceived and a higher expected degree of intimacy group mean than the no loss group mean. The results were that the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Due to the small sample size, no significant results were obtained and no significant trends were observed. These findings contribute to the ongoing use of the PAIR Inventory (Schaefer and Olson, 1981).

## Conclusions

This study suffered from the lack of more sensitive measurement tools in the determination of intimacy. Because of the variations in definition, the variable of intimacy is difficult to operationalize, and thus, difficult to measure. In order to bind the theoretical concepts together, the definition of intimacy as "an interpersonal process within which two interaction partners experience and express feelings, communicate verbally and nonverbally, satisfy social motives, augment or reduce social fears, talk and learn about themselves and their unique characteristics, and become close" (Reis and Shaver, 1988) was used.

The failure to reject the null hypothesis may, thus, have resulted from the lack of uniformity of the theoretical material. The lack of agreement about the definition of the concepts among those who espouse this intergenerational theory of the effects of death lead to difficulty in operationalizing its variables. For instance, the shock wave theory, as Bowen (1982) explained, contains variables most difficult to operationalize and measure. Part of this exploratory study's weakness was the inability to find and operationalize variables held in common among the theoretical concepts presented in the literature. There appears to be different effects for the surviving male depending on when the death occurred, whether it was before the age of five or during adolescence.

This exploratory study failed to reject the null hypothesis. It also failed to produce data affirming the research upon which it is built. Hepworth et al. (1984) presents results that support the general conviction that loss of a parent affects later



intimate relationships. Persons who lose a parent by death in later adolescence tend to move into subsequent intimate relationships either more quickly or more slowly than those who have not incurred parental loss. Although statistical data from this study did not support that assumption, essays from the father-loss group show a clear and consistent trend toward fear of relationships in general, and fear of getting hurt and rejected once involved in a relationship.

The concept of family's accommodation by grief has no analogue in systems theory as an individual's grief process has in psychodynamic theory. One explanation is that the death of an important family member affects the system in ways not parallel to those by which an individual is affected by grief (Strange, 1987). The system indeed responds to the death of one of its members as a major stressor (Hill, 1949), but even the concept of "one of its members dying" is an individual concept. Individual psychodynamic theory includes stages whereby the individual is reintegrated into life after experiencing a death in the family. There is no clear stage theory, however, explaining the reintegration of the whole system after such a death.

The null hypothesis was not rejected, yet useful research questions emerged from adjunctive analyses. A qualitative approach to this study might uncover more detail about the specific father-son relationship. One major question for future research is the quality of the father-son relationship and how that affects later relationships. A case study of these individuals would also allow a more detailed analysis of their lives after the death. For instance, a remarriage may have a dramatic effect on the child, either positive or negative. While the sample size was too small to

argue for a significant difference between the two groups, a trend in the data was observed.

### Limitations

Limitations included the potential inaccuracy of respondents' memories, the weakness of the measurement tool, the researcher collecting the data, the informal testing procedure, and an insufficient number of subjects. A methodological limitation was that while a theoretical perspective of family systems was employed, the respondents were all treated as individuals in the collecting of data and scoring of instruments. Furthermore, the respondents' relationship partner was not included when considering the data. Another limitation was the complexity of the subject itself. The variables and components of the concepts of family grief were more multidimensional than dealt with in this exploratory study. This limit is a restriction in scope. Future research would focus on a more coherent theoretical perspective and a more complete list of variables operationalized.

The sample size was not sufficient to achieve the desired power to conduct this research and test hypotheses. For future research on this topic, a much larger sample size of respondents would be needed. Future research, for example, could focus on the potentially different grief patterns between adolescents and children under five. Secondly, a limitation of the sample was that no generalizations could be made due to sampling procedures of convenience. A future sample more representative of the larger population could be chosen and an adequate means could be devised to measure respondents against a nationwide demographic profile. Finally, future sampling should

reach a more diverse population thus avoiding the problem of a "restricted range" in the sample.

There were also limitations involving the PAIR Inventory. This instrument is a commonly accepted method of assessing degrees of intimacy in intimate relationships and it uses constructs that marriage and family therapists typically use to measure intimacy (Schaefer and Olson, 1981). This scale, however, has limitations as a research instrument. The limitations include ambiguity between perceived and expected degrees of intimacy. Several subjects found it tedious responding to the same questions twice, even though a different perspective was employed. An additional limitation for research purposes was a reliance on past perceptions and apparent sensitivity to fluctuations in perception of past levels of intimacy to current perceptions of the relationship. Finally, many of responses for expected degrees of intimacy fell at the extreme ends of the continuum (Strongly Agree or Disagree), which leaves little room for differences between subjects.

#### Implications for Future Research

A major concern growing out of this research is the lack of a system's perspective on family reaction to loss, specifically its effect on later relationships of the surviving children. The field of the study of grief has been limited to an individual theoretical perspective. While the research involved in this study was subject to limitations, the theory it sought to test needed elaboration and coherence. Systems theory offers potential for accomplishing the tasks required of explanation and prediction for families who have experienced the death of a family member. The lack

of a systems theory of grief hampers a full understanding of the transgenerational effects of death on the family, especially those which are gender specific, such as this study. It is therefore recommended that a full theoretical framework be devised to account for grief from a systems perspective.

There are several directions in which further related work might proceed. The present study, and the literature on which it builds, considers primarily the intimacy within relationships. Longer term studies, looking more closely for qualitative differences in type of relationship, might prove to be theoretically rewarding and clinically useful. In the context of relationship quality, more work is needed to spell out more precisely the factors that lead a person with parental loss to choose one or another attitude toward future relationships. One might look more closely at how father loss effects the many facets of a male child's life, including intimate relationships. The loss of a male role model certainly has a tremendous impact on the child's life. A comparison of male and female reaction to loss might also prove to be useful. As mentioned earlier, an examination of the long-term effect for adolescents (>Age 12) versus children under five years of age could be studied. Additionally, a comparison of the effects of parental loss and divorce loss on future intimate relationships might shed some light on the different factors involved in each loss.

Finally, the definition of intimacy is a concern for future research. A commonly held understanding of the nature of intimacy is to be highly recommended.

### Summary

Overall, while the specific hypothesis was not supported, this exploratory study identified the potential relationship between father loss and its effect on future relationships of the surviving male child. Especially important is for systems theory to evolve an understanding of family grief with the system itself as distinct from an individual analysis by psychoanalytic theory.

## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A**  
**SUBJECT CONSENT FORM**

THE EFFECTS OF FATHER LOSS ON SUBSEQUENT INTIMATE  
RELATIONSHIPS OF MALE CHILDREN

I AM BEING ASKED TO READ THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL TO ENSURE THAT I AM INFORMED OF THE NATURE OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY AND OR HOW I WILL PARTICIPATE IN IT, IF I CONSENT TO DO SO. SIGNING THIS FORM WILL INDICATE THAT I HAVE BEEN SO INFORMED AND THAT I GIVE MY CONSENT. FEDERAL REGULATIONS REQUIRE WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT PRIOR TO PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY SO THAT I CAN KNOW THE NATURE AND THE RISKS OF MY PARTICIPATION AND CAN DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE OR NO PARTICIPATE IN A FREE AND INFORMED MANNER.

\_\_\_\_\_ gives permission for Todd Edwards to gather some information on the effects of father loss (or presence) on later intimate relationships. Should I choose to participate in this study, I understand that only the information I provide will be used. This information will remain confidential at all times and my participate is strictly voluntary.

I am being invited to participate in this study because I am between the ages of 18-30 and my father passed away when I was between the ages of 6 - 16 (father loss group only). Approximately 50 subjects will be enrolled in this study.

If I agree to participate, I will be asked to agree to the following: Respond to an initial questionnaire requesting dates of the death on one's father (father loss group only); report ones perceived and expected degrees of intimacy in a past or present relationship; indicate level of commitment in present relationship; and complete a brief instrument to assess the meaning of the lost relationship in regard to the loss of a male role model and its effect on your later relationships (father loss group only).

There will be minimal risks to the participants. It may bring up unresolved issues related to the death of one's father or difficulties they may have in a past or present relationship. However, participants may gain insight into expected and perceived degrees of intimacy in their past or present relationships. It may also provide relationship enhancement.

There are no costs to participate in this study.



BEFORE GIVING MY CONSENT BY SIGNING THIS FORM, THE METHODS, INCONVENIENCES, RISK AND BENEFITS HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME AND MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I UNDERSTAND THAT I MAY ASK QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME AND THAT I AM FREE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE PROJECT AT ANY TIME WITHOUT CAUSING BAD FEELINGS. MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT MAY BE ENDED BY THE INVESTIGATOR OR BY THE SPONSOR FOR REASONS THAT WOULD BE EXPLAINED. NEW INFORMATION DEVELOPED DURING THE COURSE OF THIS STUDY WHICH MAY AFFECT MY WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT WILL BE GIVEN TO ME AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE. I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS RESEARCH PROJECT WILL BE GIVEN TO ME AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE. I UNDERSTAND THE HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE WITH ACCESS RESTRICTED. IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, I MAY CALL THE HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE AT 626-6721.

TO THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, TODD EDWARDS, OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT. I UNDERSTAND THAT I DO NOT GIVE UP ANY OF MY LEGAL RIGHTS BY SIGNING THIS FORM. A COPY OF THIS SIGNED CONSENT FORM WILL BE GIVEN TO ME.

---

Subject's Signature

---

Date

#### INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who is signing this consent form understands clearly the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his participation and his signature is legally valid. A medical problem or language or educational barrier has not precluded this understanding.

---

Signature of Investigator

---

Date

**APPENDIX B**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

**General Information:** This information is confidential and will only be used for describing the persons who participated in this study.

**Last name:**

**Education in years:**

**Race:**

**Age:**

**Has anyone in your family been in therapy or counseling or been treated for a mental condition or disorder in the past two years?**

**YES NO (Circle one)**

**Thanks for your help!**

On this sheet of paper, please list the approximately date of your father's death in month and year. This is a death that occurred between the respondents age of six and sixteen.

Date of Death  
(Month/Year)

## APPENDIX C

### LEVEL OF RELATIONSHIP COMMITMENT

On this sheet of paper, please indicate your level of commitment to your present intimate relationship.

\_\_\_\_\_ Not Dating

\_\_\_\_\_ Casual Dating

\_\_\_\_\_ Serious Commitment

## APPENDIX D

### MEANING OF LOST RELATIONSHIP WITH FATHER

On this sheet of paper, please describe the meaning of the lost relationship with your father, specifically in regard to the loss of a male role model and its effect on you later intimate relationships.



**APPENDIX E**  
**PAIR INVENTORY**

INSTRUCTIONS: This inventory is used to measure different kinds of "intimacy" in your relationship. You are to indicate your response to each statement by using the following five point scale.

---

0	1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree

---

There are two steps to the Inventory. In Part I you are to respond in the way you feel about the item at present. Use Step One of the ANSWER SHEET for this step. It is labeled "How it is Now."

In the second step you are to respond according to the way you would like it to be, that is, if you could have your relationship be any way that you may want it to be. Use Step Two for this step. It is labeled "How I would like it to be." There are no right or wrong answers.

Respond to all the items in Step One before proceeding to Step Two.

\* \* \* \* \*

	0	1	2	3	4
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	My partner listens to me when I need someone to talk to.				
2.	We enjoy spending time with other couples.				
3.	I am satisfied with our sex life.				
4.	My partner helps me clarify my thoughts.				
5.	We enjoy the same recreational activities.				
6.	My partner has all of the qualities I've always wanted in a mate.				
7.	I can state my feelings without him/her getting defensive.				
8.	We usually "keep to ourselves."				
9.	I feel our sexual activity is just routine.				
10.	When it comes to having a serious discussion, it seems we have little in common.				
11.	I share in few of my partner's interests.				
12.	There are times when I do not feel a great deal of love and affection for my partner.				
13.	I often feel distant from my partner.				
14.	We have few friends in common.				
15.	I am able to tell my partner when I want sexual intercourse.				
16.	I feel "put-down" in a serious conversation with my partner.				
17.	We like playing together.				
18.	Every new thing I have learned about my partner has pleased me.				

	0	1	2	3	4
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
19.	My partner can really understand my hurts and joys.				
20.	Having time together with friends is an important part of our shared activities.				
21.	I "hold back" my sexual interest because my partner makes me feel uncomfortable.				
22.	I feel it is useless to discuss some things with my partner.				
23.	We enjoy the out-of-doors together.				
24.	My partner and I understand each other completely.				
25.	I feel neglected at times by my partner.				
26.	Many of my partner's closest friend are also my closest friends.				
27.	Sexual expression is an essential part of our relationship.				
28.	My partner frequently tries to change my ideas.				
29.	We seldom find time to do fun things together.				
30.	I don't think anyone could possible be happier than my partner and I when we are with one another.				
31.	I sometimes feel lonely when we're together.				
32.	My partner disapproves of some of my friends.				
33.	My partner seems disinterested in sex.				
34.	We have an endless number of things to talk about.				
35.	I feel we share some of the same interests.				
36.	I have some needs that are not being met by my relationship.				

## APPENDIX F

### LETTER FROM FAMILY INVENTORIES PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
TWIN CITIES

Family Social Science  
290 McNeal Hall  
1985 Buford Avenue  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108  
(612) 625-7250

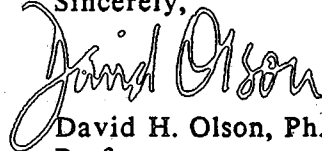
## PERMISSION TO USE PAIR

I am pleased to give you permission to use PAIR in your reesarch project, teaching, or clinical work with couples and families. You can either duplicate the materials directly or have them retyped for use in a new format. If they are retyped, acknowledgement should be given regarding the name of the instrument, the developer's name, and the University of Minnesota.

In exchange for providing this permission, we would appreciate a copy of any papers, thesis, or reports that you complete using these inventories. This will help us in staying abreast of the most recent development and research with these scales. Thank you for your cooperation.

In closing, I hope you find PAIR of value in your work with couples and families. I would appreciate hearing from you as you make use of this inventory.

Sincerely,



David H. Olson, Ph.D.  
Professor

DHO:vmw

FAMILY INVENTORIES PROJECT (FIP)  
Director: David H. Olson, Ph.D.

**APPENDIX G**  
**LETTER FROM HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE**

February 25, 1992

Todd Edwards, M.A.  
Department of Counseling and Guidance  
Education Building, Room 218  
Main Campus

RE: THE EFFECTS OF FATHER-LOSS ON SUBSEQUENT INTIMATE  
RELATIONSHIPS OF MALE CHILDREN

Dear Mr. Edwards:

We received documents concerning your above cited project. Regulations published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(3)] exempt this type of research from review by our Committee.

Please be advised that approval for this project and the requirement of a subject's consent form is to be determined by your department.

Thank you for informing us of your work. If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact this office.

Sincerely yours,

*William F. Denny*  
William F. Denny, M.D.  
Chairman,  
Human Subjects Committee

WFD:sj

cc: Departmental/College Review Committee



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