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APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS

In this study, interviews were conducted in Sotho and translated into English. As a result, the translations come across as incorrect English, but were kept that way to maintain the exact, deep and emotional meaning of the Participants as much as possible.

PARTICIPANT ONE

Interviewer: How did you come to start this group?

Interviewee: You know I can't recall but then, I felt that maybe widows are neglected.

Interviewer: Was it before or after you were widowed?

Interviewee: No it was after. Maybe from my observation but ok, let me give you part of my background. Being a nurse by profession I used to do a lot of work in marriage counselling as a volunteer, when later I got employed as a marriage guidance counsellor and education counsellor as well. So I used to do a lot of sex education, marriage counselling, pre-marital counselling, and other related issues. And then later I found that even at home people would consult with me on various issues. I later found that the counselling skills that I acquired at marriage guidance helped me in that they became applicable in different cases. Especially in conflict resolution, counselling skills really helped me a lot as I understood them very well, including my life experiences.

Interviewer: So after your husband's death (Rich), when was it?

Interviewee: He passed away in 1994, 20th of March, ten years ago. I can't recall. You know what actually happened (laughing), I started thinking about other widows who were not as fortunate as I was. At the same time, a certain white lady (Tony) that I knew from church (Catholic) lost a husband (Chris) much later than mine. I knew her because her parish was our twin parish. We tried to do some activities together between the two parishes, but we found that the white people were boring us. Our parish would visit theirs, have Mass and after, we would have planned to have football between our children and theirs. After Mass most of the white congregation would go and only a few would stay behind, those who still had consciences. So with time we decided to



stop the relationship. Tony contacted me later and asked me to meet with her. I told her about the widows' support group that I had started, and we meet as widows just to share our experiences, and see how we can help each other, because others need more help than others, others cope and others cannot. So Tony suggested that through her firm (Marfam-marriage and family organisation), she would like to do the same. One Sunday we sat down and plan although it was Catholic oriented. Now she wanted to prescribe how it should be conducted. She suggested that it should not be a workshop but each widow should reflect and talk about her experiences and share with others.

Interviewer: How can they be so prescriptive?

Interviewee: That is something that no one could be prescriptive about. It deals with one's feelings. Like me, Rich was sick for fourteen years or eighteen, I can't remember.

Interviewer: What was the problem?

Interviewee: Rich passed away in 1994, suffering from the enlargement of the heart and was also diabetic. So he was in and out of hospital, and in and out of ICU. But when he was out of hospital you would be surprised because we would go to jazz festivals and all. When he relapsed, he would relapse (laugh).

Interviewer: How did you cope with that?

Interviewee: Ok. Even now when I look back, I'm surprised at myself. I think Rich's understanding played an important role because it helped me to cope. I remember then I was the national chairperson of the South African Association of Early Childhood. I was travelling provincially and I used to go overseas once or twice a year and he would never complain or feel neglected.

Interviewer: You related well with each other.

Interviewee: Very well. Even when he was about to pass on we were able to talk about his death. He would tell me that he realises that he had reached the end of the road. He was on life support machines in hospital. He even told me that he had a man-to-man talk with his physician, and told him that he wanted to go home. The doctor felt like he was giving up on him, and he told the doctor that he had done more than his share, and felt he had to go. One day at home we started talking about his death and he expressed his wishes. He asked me to open his side of the

cupboards, and decided with me which clothes to give away and which ones not. He even suggested how I should look on the day of his funeral. In fact, he had a clothing material that he had planned to make a suit out of and he never came to do it. He suggested that I should make a short skirt and a jacket, and even chose shoes for me. When my suit was ready, I put it on for him and was very pleased.

Interviewer: Do you believe that a dying person knows that he is going?

Interviewee: Yes. That's what I always tell people. But some people don't say it. Rich did say, he was clear and direct. Rich was then released and he stayed home for ten days and he wanted to be baptised by my Catholic priest. Mind you he was not Catholic but an atheist. He was desperate to be baptised. The next day he forced me to call the priest and he came. Another thing about Rich was that he was always having people around him. As a result even the day he died, he died in the presence of people who were with him in the house. He was baptised in front of a lot of people who witnessed his baptismal. I was pleased with that because people would have complained that he was not a churchgoer but was buried by the Catholic Church. He died soon thereafter. It was on a Friday when he asked me to pray for him and I told him and reassured him that I always prayed for him. But I also told him to pray for himself. We knelt down the two of us and he prayed and when he fished he said Amen. Then the same night he suggested that it would be better for him to sleep with one male family member because he felt that I should take time out and rest instead of taking him to the bathroom the whole night. I did not mind as long as it made him happy. He felt that he was bothering me. He did not sleep well on Saturday. On Sunday, I went to church and made sure that I leave the church as soon as possible. I left and went home, and I found him with his friend. Those days he refused to eat. In the afternoon most of his friends came over to see him and, one of his friends came to call me. He had asked for a glass of water, and he drank very fast and he gasped (he struggled breathing and died). Immediately thereafter the priest walked in.

Interviewer: How did you feel?

Interviewee: Numb but I had to think quickly because I had already called the priest. I asked the priest if I could pray, and he agreed. In the prayer I thanked God for having given me Rich and the life that we lived together and asked God to carry me through the funeral arrangements. After saying Amen, I asked the priest in front of everybody to burry Chris on Saturday, and leave the church at ten o'clock. The priest agreed to all of that. When it came to his family, I told them when the funeral would be and the time. Rich's mother's family supported me, and his father's did not. I made sure that they should never force me to go through the rituals that I don't believe in,

especially taking anything oral. Rich even asked me not to interfere with his bed where the mattress would be put on the floor. In other words, not just anybody should walk in and out of his bedroom. So that evening I told everybody that I would sleep with my friends in my bedroom and nobody else.

Interviewer: What did your in-laws say?

Interviewee: When the undertaker came to fetch the corpse I walked up to the door (behind the corpse). I just felt one of Rich's aunts grabbing me rough, saying I should not walk Rich out. I was too depressed to say much but just my look said it all. I told the whole family that my maid of honour at my wedding would be on my side at the funeral (on the day of the funeral), to avoid being covered with heavy blankets in the middle of summer. Rich and I had planned the whole funeral, even what I would put on that day. I even put on those clothes for him the Friday before he died, and he liked the outfit. On the day of the funeral I had a hat on, something I am not used to. From the church to the car I made sure that his family walked far behind me. I did not want to be crowded (did not want too many people around me). I was able to walk and see people around me.

Interviewer: Do you have children?

Interviewee: Yes, three. When their father passed away they were old enough, say around twenty. The Sunday before the funeral (a day after Chris passed away), I sensed that his family was talking about me. One cousin of Rich came to me and told me that she had her uncle as one of the beneficiaries of her "society" (burial society). I thanked her and left it there. I forgot about it. When Rich died, I did not even think about it because I was organised (financially independent). I strongly believe that some of the family members influenced her against it, saying that I have lots of money. I think that's what they said because she said nothing about it thereafter, and none of them helped. One nasty cousin volunteered to buy two sheep, and one of them died, meaning that Chris did not approve (a belief that the deceased did not want help from him and, in a way, where the dying of the sheep was his way of communicating his feelings and disapproval of help from his cousin). They (the deceased's relatives) did not even tell me that so and so would buy the sheep. They should have told me. During that time, I had a "spaza shop" to keep Rich busy and they just thought that I have money and I'm working. Nobody helped me with that shop except my children and other children that I brought up. The morning after the funeral (burial), I took out all Rich's clothes that he ordered me to give away. He did not want his suits to be given away. On Sunday morning, one cousin of Rich told me that he wants to know about Rich's suits. I told him in front of everybody that his uncle sorted them himself, and the rest that the cousin was

asking about were for my children. Although there was no need to explain, I saw that as an opportunity to tell off the gossiping old fools who were around. It was havoc because they were telling me that I kept my husband's clothes for my family of origin. That cousin demanded all the CD's he bought his uncle and, believe you me, he took all the CD's and left. For me that was not important. Do you know that that cousin lost a wife before Rich died. He did not even have a cent, and I thought he had money. He was and still is working for government. He asked Rich and I to help him burry his wife. He only bought the coffin. But when it was my turn when my husband passed away, it was a different story. The last time that cousin came to my house was the day after the funeral. Things started going wrong for him. Cars (his) were involved in accidents, house burglary, lost four cars at gunpoint, he got sick. Three years later he called me, wanting to come and see me. He came the next day and explaining that he could not come with his children. He looked embarrassed and asked me never to talk about the past, and asked for forgiveness.

Interviewer: How is his relationship now with the rest of the family and relatives.

Interviewee: It seems as if they don't talk to each other and don't know the others' where about. Their other uncle passed away two-three years after Rich, and this cousin did not even go (did not attend the funeral). A few months after Rich's death that niece of Rich who came to tell me that Rich was one of the beneficiaries in her "society scheme" came to apologise and I had forgotten about it. I told her that she should not worry because I had everything covered.

Interviewer: It seems like because of the support you received and your personality you were able to cope.

Interviewee: I think so. What also helped me was the fact that Rich and I talked and came to closure. Like when he used to say that he thinks he has reached the end of the road, I would say to him that if you are ready to go, we will accept and let you go. He told me that he is ready but feels guilty to leave me behind. I reassured him by telling him that when he goes he will be our angel and ask God to look after us.

Interviewer: How did you experience the support group?

Interviewee: We shared and it is therapeutic. I preferred a black only group because of our different dynamics in our societies. I got widows through the church. Some are Catholics and some are not. I mostly identify them with their black clothes in the streets, supermarkets, and I would greet her and invite her, but some would not be interested.

Interviewer: Why is it that some would not be interested?

Interviewee: I haven't got an answer because they haven't opened up, but those who join benefit a lot. Sometimes I would invite a widow to the Widows Forum, and you'll hear one giving excuses. I would know there and there that she is not interested. There's this specific one, a nursing sister. She would promise to come and would not. One day I saw her peeping in during our group session and left. Why she didn't come in and join I don't know. Maybe she did that because she felt that she was above us, or showed me that she is there and won't come in. I'm not a psychologist but I'm just thinking. She has this tendency of crying because of petty things. She even often causes misery at the church, and a liar. She's got issues.

Interviewer: Is your church supportive of widows?

Interviewee: Yes, our priest encourages support. It's only that there will be those who will isolate themselves. There's this old lady at the church who would gather all these young widows to the forum.

Interviewer: How do you conduct the forum?

Interviewee: As I've told you that we used to meet with the widows of the other Catholic Church in the suburbs. We would start with introductions where each widow introduces herself. Then we talk about expectations, what the widows expect from the forum. Then we would divide them into groups, and then have a report back from different groups. It was during the report back that you hear the hurt in them and unbelievable stories. I remember one widow telling us that she buried her husband's corpse without a head. There are a lot of sad stories that do not help one to let go and move on. What complicates matters worse is the fact that the widow's in-laws suspected that their son was murdered by the widow's boyfriends. That is very common. Because we were a diverse group, coloureds, white, black, Portuguese, Greeks, etc. The problem with that was the fact that widows preferred to talk in their own languages, with other widows of similar cultures and dynamics. What I prefer is to introduce myself first because there are always new members, and let them be spontaneous without preparing anything. Now the joint sessions we used to have with our white counterparts been terminated because Tony would come preparing a lecture, running a workshop, which I thought was prescriptive and insensitive because people feel like they do and are told how to grieve. It was boring. Now when it's only us, we start with a prayer and hymn (the African way). Sometimes we would invite speakers with good information. I'm telling you, widows have problems out there. It's very rare to be in the kind of situation that I was in when Rich died.

Interviewer: Were there any rituals that you went through?

Interviewee: Nothing and I did not even had black clothes on but my grandfather's daughter told me that I needed to drink herbs. She bought them, gave me instructions and after she left I through them away. It was different because it was my sister. My in-laws did not interfere with me. The one ritual that I went through was after about six months when my mother's sister was supposed to take off "sefifi" (the cleansing). They bathed me in the early hours of the morning with cold water, and it was raining that morning. In that water I don't know what it was but something itchy. I even thought to myself that these women who got widowed and remarry and remarry are brave if they have to go through this over and over again.

Interviewer: How did you feel about the cleansing ceremony?

Interviewee: To me it was not important. It was just a matter of respecting my aunt because she was saying that even if I did not have black clothes on the cleansing I must. What I did not want to be associated with was drinking anything oral. For instance there's grandmother of mine who lost a husband. I was then asked how we do these things in our family and I told them that I don't know. I then suggested that they do as she wished. She got sick thereafter and I told her it could be those herbs she decided to boil and drink the water. She was then told that she took the wrong stuff, and was advised to go to her family of origin to reverse the wrongs and do everything the way her family do them. It is also expensive.

Interviewer: Which rituals are followed, the husband's or wife's family rituals?

Interviewee: I'm not sure but what is common is "dipitsa" (the water from boiled herbs) that are bought at the herbalist shop, boil the herbs and drink that water. After the death of Rich I didn't do any of those things. Rich knew that I was diabetic and have a problem with my blood pressure. I did not take all those things and am still healthy. It has to do with belief system and attitude. I didn't tell myself that I'm diabetic and widowed, feeling pity for myself. I had the support structure and I participated actively in that.

Interviewer: What is common in the widows that you've had contact with?

Interviewee: I can't say because their circumstances differ. For example, some let their in-laws control them from the beginning. With me I don't even have contact with Rich's aunts and uncles. My in-laws passed away a long time ago.

Interviewer: How long were you married and how old were you?

Interviewee: We were married in 1971 and he passed away in 1994. It means we were married for twenty-three years, and then, I was forty-three.

Interviewer: Do you have any childhood experience of loss?

Interviewee: None

Interviewer: How about adulthood?

Interviewee: My father passed away before I got married and, because my mother could not do much at that point in time, I had to take over. As a result, I was in control then so as to oversee the running and arrangements of the funeral.

PARTICIPANT TWO

Interviewer: How long have you been widowed?

Interviewee: For a year and four months.

Interviewer: How long were you married?

Interviewee: For about twenty-five years.

Interviewer: How old were you then?

Interviewee: I was forty-seven with five children but the eldest passed away two years before his father. He was sick for about two months and that was it (he died only after two months). It hit me more than his father's departure. He would always tell me that he went to see his doctor. He used to complain about pains all over the body and was bothering him (pains). His doctor sent him to Baragwanath Hospital, took X-rays and blood samples. They also advised him not to carry heavy stuff, but could not tell what the problem was. One morning I realised that he was really struggling and I took him back to the hospital. The second week at the hospital he wanted to go home. I was not going to see him at the hospital that Saturday but sent his siblings, and promised to come see him during the week. He asked me to leave the nursing staff with my home phone number. On Saturday morning when his siblings were busy preparing themselves to go and see him, the phone rang and it was the hospital. I even thought they were telling me to come get him. The



person on the other side of the phone asked me who I am and if I'm on my own in the house or not. That irritated me because I already sensed that something was wrong and that person was going round in circles. My elder daughter then grabbed the phone and asked the nurse to say whatever was happening. They then told us he passed away the previous night. He died of heart failure, which they could not diagnose. At that time, my husband was also sick. He had been suffering from heart problems for about five years and was even given early retirement because of his condition. Baragwanath hospital was able to manage his condition. Even then, my son's death devastated me then and is still devastating me (she became tearful and there was a long pause). It was worse because I expected that from my husband and not my son.

Interviewer: Was your husband bed ridden?

Interviewee: No, he was on and off even though you wouldn't see that he was sick. He was very independent although he would struggle breathing. I would sometimes ask him where the problem was and he would just tell me that it's not that bad but I could tell that he was suffering. He didn't want to worry me. Instead, he would joke about his illness.

Interviewer: How was your relationship with your husband?

Interviewee: We were very close although we didn't have that much support because he came from a very small family. He was the only child. He grew up with his mother and maternal grandmother who, by the time he got sick, they were both dead. He was very close to his grandmother. So we only had each other, and the children.

Interviewer: Did you get moral support from outside the home?

Interviewee: I don't remember getting support from anybody. I coped by accepting it because even my siblings had their own problems, and both my parents had passed away. He kept himself busy by going to church on Sundays.

Interviewer: How did you feel about his condition?

Interviewee: You know, because he got sick before my son, I accepted it easier because he stopped working in 1994. His independence really helped me cope because I would leave him by himself and go to work, run my errands, and would find him comfortable and looking after the house.

Interviewer: Did your church give you the support you needed?



Interviewee: No. I was alone. I got support just before he passed away. We attended two different parishes. His parish really gave us support. I would send a message to my parish and priest, but no one would come. They would only ask me about his condition and it would end there. When you needed them most they were not there. His parish members would come home for prayers and we used to really feel supported. I ended up joining my husband's parish. One time I met my old parish priest and he asked me why I don't come to church anymore. I told him straight (in his eyes) that when I needed him he was not there and I did not see any compelling reason to still continue at his parish. I told him straight where I was and why. He then asked me how my husband was doing and he pretended to be shocked when I told him that he passed away. He persuaded me to come back to his parish but was embarrassed.

Interviewer: Did your husband die at home or hospital?

Interviewee: He died at the hospital. He was admitted because he was really struggling at that time. He would usually struggle and would often ask us to take him to the hospital.

Interviewer: How was he at the hospital?

Interviewee: I think he knew that he was going because he told me straight that his time was up. At the hospital he told me to go and collect his money from a friend of his because the children and I would need every cent available. Every time I went to see him at the hospital he would ask me about his money from a friend. I would reassure him but would still complain. He again asked me to tell that friend to come and see him but he did not go. That was his best friend.

Interviewer: How did you feel about that?

Interviewee: I knew that he was always helpful and should not expect people to be like him. He should have known that people would never be the same, i.e. if he was helpful, he should not have expected the same from others.

Interviewer: What happened the last time you saw him alive at the hospital?

Interviewee: At the hospital he told me that his time was up. That did not bother me because I did not believe him. The reason was that the first time he was admitted I could tell that he might go, and he did not. But when he told me that his time was up, I just took it as talking. That day I promised to come see him the next day and instead of answering me he started praying and asking God to take him and put him on His chest, and then Amen. Those were his last words. He

was still alive then because the doctors were reassuring me that he could hear me talk although he was not able to answer back. He used to tell me at the hospital that our son always talked to him, and promised to come and fetch him. The next day I went with my children (to the hospital). It was on a Sunday. When I walked into the ward, I saw his friend who owed him money and other people. That was the friend that my husband asked to see before he died and he did not come. When I went to his bed I found a different patient and I got tense. I asked the sister in charge and she just told me to look for him. I looked at her and kept quiet. I got angry. Somewhere along the way she came back and asked for the family. We went into her office with my children. It was then that she told us that my husband passed away the previous night.

Interviewer: How did you feel at that point in time?

Interviewee: I just stood up and walked out of that office. It was like a dream. I was numb. His friends who were not there for him when he needed them were waiting outside. I told them that he was no more. I consoled myself with the fact that the last time we were together was only the two of us. When we got home we just sat quietly with my children. Nobody was talking. Later my children went out to tell the neighbours. At that time I could not tell whether it was night or day. The church members also came and really made us feel supported. The funeral arrangements went well. Unfortunately, my husband's family is very small. He was the only child, his mother and maternal grandmother. They all passed away except his distant relative, his uncle. Everything went well, and his uncle told me not to wear black clothes. He felt that I nursed my husband all that time and to him (uncle), that was enough.

Interviewer: How did you fare after the funeral?

Interviewee: I had thought that after his death life will be better knowing that he was now fine and not in pain. Instead it was worse than when he was still sick with me. My love for him overwhelmed me and really felt lonely. My children did not want me to sleep by myself. They always shared a bed with me.

Interviewer: Which death rituals did you go through?

Interviewee: I was on the mattress the whole week although I was up and about organising this and that, as it was only my children and I. More often people would come to see me during the day and I would not be around. The corpse came home overnight. That was torture although I held on to what we used to talk about when he was no more. At the time of his death, we were planning to erect his mother, son's, daughter's and grandmother's memorials. When we were



busy erecting them, he said to me once that he wanted to be buried on top of his grandmother. Even neighbours knew that. He did not even care if I wanted to be buried on top of him. To him, that was how it was going to be. The erection of the tombstones was stopped the week that he passed away, and we asked the tombstone company to include him on the inscription. That really consoled me. After the funeral (burial), his uncle suggested that I should follow my family of origin's rituals. He suggested the cleansing, which I went through, including the Holy water from church, and the Mass that used to be conducted at home.

Interviewer: How did you go through the cleansing ceremony?

Interviewee: I could not even ask anybody at home because they all did not know how to go about that. We did not even have parents, they both passed away a long time ago. My eldest sister was worse because she did not know anything. My second eldest sister was a born-again (does not believe in rituals). Coming from a small family can be a problem. Ever since he passed away, I never even thought of a companion. Right now I feel that my son's death is still bothering me. I have not come to terms with it yet. Every time we talk about him, it feels like he passed away recently. What is still bothering me is this excruciating headache that wakes me up at night. My spirit is always down.

Interviewer: Did you ever lose somebody close to you in your childhood?

Interviewee: I lost my father at a very young age, and we were very close. I was still at primary school. My mother passed away when I was in Standard five. We struggled because my sisters brought me up.

Interviewer: What other crises in your adult life did you experience?

Interviewee: Everything in my adult life went well until one night, when my family and I went to Sebokeng to bury my nephew. That night IFP supporters came and shot at random. Apparently they wanted the corpse of my nephew because they even demanded it from the undertaker. A lot of people died that night. I don't know how we survived. You know, God is alive. My neighbour's children came along and I ordered them before the shootout to stay at my sister's neighbour's house because I was busy with the elders at that time. My grandson did not want to be with anybody but me that night and I had to carry him on my back. When we were busy, I saw a group of men in black and white clothes walking into the yard holding something. They scattered all over the yard looking into the house, with one looking directly at me. It would seem like they were waiting for the sign to start shooting. I then asked my late son to get me a glass of water so that I

could take a pain killer (I had a terrible headache). He came back and I ordered him to join his siblings at the neighbour's house. As soon as my son left, the one man who was looking directly at me started shooting. Fortunately he shot the door and not me. Everybody was on the floor. Those men were looking for my nephew's corpse, and were under the impression that it was in the house. Apparently they first went to the undertaker demanding the corpse, asking him the funeral arrangements and where the deceased's home is, and which day and time will the funeral start. It was then decided that instead of burying him in Sebokeng, he would be buried in Soweto. We only discovered after the fact that they not only shot but also threw grenades, which did not explode. According to them, the whole house should have been down with the corpse (because they believed that the corpse was in the house). After that they drove away in their mini buses. All my family members were safe except one of my other son's clothes were torn and looked like they were on fire. Apparently he went out of the house just when they started shooting and his clothes caught fire. Some people were already dead, some were dying. It was bad. My nephew was killed and was thrown in the sewerage. Fortunately one municipality worker found him just after that. According to the story, those men tied him with a wire to the car and dragged him. It was then that they through his corpse in the sewerage. They were angry because he was found and was going to get a decent burial.

Interviewer: How did you know about this widows' forum?

Interviewee: It was easy because I'm Catholic and is run by Catholics at the Catholic Church. I knew about it but did not qualify even if I wanted to join.

Interviewer: What were your expectations about it?

Interviewee: My objective was to share whatever was difficult for me at any point in time with women who were going through similar experiences as me, making me feel that it was normal and expected to go through that.

Interviewer: Did it come to your expectation?

Interviewee: It really helped because I found myself to be stronger than most widows in the group, supporting them morally and emotionally. You won't believe how some widows go through. I even came to ask myself at times how they manage.

Interviewer: Is there anything that I could have ignored?

Interviewee: Not that I can think of.

PARTICIPANT THREE

Interviewer: How did you come to know about the widows' forum?

Interviewee: My husband passed away seven months ago. Few weeks after the death of my husband I was approached by the gatekeeper as a neighbour and told me about the forum. I did not know that a forum like that existed, maybe because I'm not Catholic. But I came to realise that it is not only for Catholics but widows.

Interviewer: How long were you married?

Interviewee: For twenty years. I lived with my in-laws (mother and father) only for all those years. At one point my brother in-law and his wife came to stay with all of us, and it was bad. She did not want to do anything in the house.

Interviewer: What was your husband doing?

Interviewee: He was a middle manager in a computer company.

Interviewer: Was your husband sick?

Interviewee: Yes, he had a heart problem, but still working although he was in and out of hospital. The nature of his job allowed him to stay at home if he was not feeling well. That heart problem I think started after his car was stolen. It did not bother me because he never provided for the family but owned a car (but could afford a car). It was very difficult for me but had no choice. When he started getting sick I would nurse him but at times pretend and get irritated, doing everything for him half heartedly, although at the same time feel pity for him, those mixed feelings. Once he recovered he would forget that I exist. He only cared about his car and himself (clothes).

Interviewer: Did you feel supported in anyway during that time?

Interviewee: I don't want to start lying, I was on my own. Nobody was there for us, including his only sibling (brother). When days are dark, friends are few. I did not have that much support, except from my own siblings although they had their own problems. Most of them were

unemployed but would come and help clean the house, and be there physically with me. I could see that they would really want to help but did not have much. Just the thought of helping was enough for me. It was everyone to himself, even after my husband's death. My neighbours were there for me, before and after the death of my husband. They made me feel that I was not alone. The church also supported me all the time. I felt that warmth because it did not discriminate against me.

Interviewer: How did you feel without support?

Interviewee: I accepted it because I knew it from long ago that when you need people's help most, they will never be there. When you have everything in the world, you will have hangers-on's. My brother in-law and his wife never supported me in their lives. We are in good terms but distant, although the two brothers had a healthy relationship. If we needed help we would never think of them. I had always been financially independent from the beginning because my husband never provided for his family. Maybe staying at his parents' house with them made him not to realise that he was a father and husband. Even my children are used to that.

Interviewer: Did your brother in-law and his wife used to come visit before?

Interviewee: They used to come but when the last of his family member died, they stopped. My husband and I used to visit them, but it felt more like people that we knew, and not relatives. I last saw them two months after the death of my husband. The reason they came was for my brother in-law to tell me that I must cleanse myself because he was not prepared to touch me (he will not bath her with his hands). It hurt me very much, not what he was saying but how he put it. He told me that I must make sure that my family of origin cleanse me because that had nothing to do with him. The children are supposed to be cleansed by their uncle (malome-their mother's brother), but he told me that he did not want his brother's children to be touched by outsiders. Maybe that's how they do things (the way they conduct their rituals). Then he was suggesting that I must also help him with the money to be able to do all that. I was not interested because that was what he wanted to do. That was all that he said. Even now, he hasn't said anything. It was also clear that they did not discuss that before because the wife was surprised to hear that. It does not look like my children will ever be cleansed although my children are not interested.

Interviewer: How was the cleansing supposed to be done?

Interviewee: I only came to know that day that according to the way they practice their death rituals, they do not touch a daughter in-law.



Interviewer: Did you go through any death rituals?

Interviewee: I did not put on black clothes but had to put something on my shoulders all the time for a year, which, according to them, is a sign of mourning the death of my husband. After a year I would be cleansed. The mattress was on the floor in my bedroom, and the deceased came home overnight. That was difficult. Even now when I am on my own I still miss him. I now watch TV on my own, and even laugh by myself. I don't expect my children to understand that. My family of origin cut my hair and cleansed me.

Interviewer: Do you believe in death rituals?

Interviewee: I can't say yes or no. It is just a matter of conscience and playing it safe. I grew up witnessing those rituals and I never questioned them. For example, when I go to the cemetery, church, and funeral. I would put something on my head as a sign of respect. That's how I was brought up. Even when I'm told to cleanse I oblige.

Interviewer: How did you cope after his death alone?

Interviewee: Reality hit when the last person left after the funeral. My brother's wife was the last to leave, although my siblings would come to see me. This is the first winter alone without human heater. I can't deal with this terrible headache that wakes me up at night, and I struggle to fall asleep. I always fall asleep in the early hours of the morning.

Interviewer: How were his last days with you?

Interviewee: He was admitted at the hospital and we talked. In fact, the last weekend with him he was still healthy. From Thursday we were together the whole time, which was uncharacteristic of us. Wherever one went, we were together until Sunday. On Monday when I was about to go to work, he said to me that it was surprising how short life can be, especially the coming week because he had to go. I left like that, and round about two o'clock that day I got a call that he was admitted at the hospital, but I did not believe it. He passed away the next day.

Interviewer: How did you feel?

Interviewee: I did not understand why because I left him with hope. It felt like a dream. What made it worse was the fact that I went to the hospital with his brother and wife, the people I was not used to and could not cry when I wanted to next to them. It was really difficult. My brother-in-law and his wife lost a teenage child through suicide. I thought as a result, they would relate to

what I was going through. I gave them all the support needed but when it came to me, the next time I saw them was a day before the funeral (burial).

Interviewer: How was your relationship with your late husband?

Interviewee: He was a very quiet person who would only answer what he was asked. Even if I could talk about what could be done in the house, he would never answer. Nothing was done to that house since his parents got it (a municipal house) without ceiling, flooring, nothing. He grew up in that house, married in it and died in it just the way it had always been. When I asked about the state of the house he would tell me that he does not have money but had a car, and expensive clothes. The only expenses for him were water and electricity, a whole manager (he was a manager but could not look after his family). Me, the cleaner at work, had to buy food, clothe the children and myself, I mean everything. That is why I am so bitter and angry with him at times because he refused to take responsibility and provide, maybe we would not be struggling the way we are. Right now I have to improve the house, get loans to take both my children to tertiary institutions because my daughter matriculated last year and he told her to look for a job because he did not have money. My son matriculated years back and is still at home because his father was not prepared to spend his money for his future.

Interviewer: Did he at least provide for his death and funeral?

Interviewee: Nothing. When I ask he would always tell me about the two burial societies that would bury him, and I should not bother him.

Interviewer: Do you see yourself as different in personality now compared to before the death of your husband?

Interviewee: I cannot say but what I am aware of is that lately I can't stand the noise or somebody who talks too much. I prefer to be by myself. I am more at peace when I am on my own.

Interviewer: Do you visit neighbours like before?

Interviewee: I have not tried because I'm scared to be hurt. Not that they will resent me visiting but I'm just playing safe. Although I don't think they can be funny. Especially now that I'm widowed, I'm not sure if my female neighbours will be comfortable to see me talk to their husbands. They may not trust me with their husbands.

Interviewer: Did you ever lose anybody close to you in your childhood or adulthood?

Interviewee: I only lost my mother nine years ago. I did not go to my father's funeral because my parents separated a long time ago and when he passed away we were never told about his death. I still don't feel happy about that. I don't remember losing anybody close to me in my childhood. My first experience was with my mother in-law in my marriage.

Interviewer: What is it in your life that when you think about it, makes you sad?

Interviewee: The fact that I was born poor, grew up poor, married poor, and would even grow old poor. I was unable to live the life I want. Maybe it was meant to be. He left his family poor and was never bothered about that in his lifetime. I am bitter about that, honestly. I was a mother and father in that house even when he was still alive and healthy. Although it does not help to be angry and bitter, there is nothing I can do about it now. I fed him, nursed him, and buried his parents for him. I created all that I'm faced up with today. I'm also worried that out of my eight siblings I'm only left with one sister. I cannot afford to lose her.

Interviewer: Do you feel secure staying in his parents' house?

Interviewee: So far nothing is showing that his brother can claim it back, but I'm not excluding that. It was never regarded as a family house, especially that the two brothers had a very close relationship. It's just that the two daughters in-law are not in good terms. It started when we both stayed with our husbands' parents and the other daughter in-law was favoured against me. I was the one who nurse our mother in-law who had a stroke and could not do anything for herself and her husband. Nothing was expected from the other daughter in-law. I decided to move out with my husband for peace sake. With time, his brother and wife could not stand our father in-law's complaints about his daughter in-law's laziness, when she tried her best to please them. They also moved out. My husband then forced me to move back with his parents, saying that they have no one to look after them (in-laws). That made me feel like a slave, unappreciated and used. I understood him when he pushed to move in with his parents again because he was not prepared to buy a house for his family but instead, take over his parents'. Even the way we moved back was not right. One day when I came back from work I found everything already moved to his parents' home instead of two people who share a life together sitting down and talk about it. On the other hand, I ended up feeling pity for my helpless mother in-law. That was how I ended up staying in my in-laws' house.

Interviewer: Is there anything that I could have left behind?



Interviewee: I'm still bitter about the fact that he never provided for the children and I. I even had to take out my money to close the gap of the very "burial societies" that he relied on. I spent a lot. I doubt if he would have buried me the way I buried him. I spent a lot. With my mean salary, I now have to for pay water and electricity that he used to pay, and still continue contribute to his "burial societies" because he put the children and I as beneficiaries. For us to still remain as beneficiaries I have to take over the monthly contributions. If he could have left money for his children for their education and life after he had passed on like most fathers and husbands. Instead of missing him at times and feel sad, I feel angry and bitter, feeling used and unappreciated.

PARTICIPANT FOUR

FIRST INTERVIEW

Interviewer: How long were you married?

Interviewee: Fourteen years. I'm now thirty-eight. We were very close, except those small disagreements that every couple goes through.

Interviewer: What was he suffering from?

Interviewee: When he first got sick, we were told that he was suffering from Tuberculosis. He did get better and started getting sick again. I don't know why because he lacked appetite and complained about his aching body. We ended up not knowing because he also complained about chest pains. He was admitted at Santa hospital. He was in and out of hospital for eighteen months. The last time he was admitted he died on his third week there. The hospital called home and found my sister. I had gone to town to get this and that for the family. My sister called me and asked me to come back home, which I couldn't understand. I was with my sister in-law and my niece. We then decided to come back home. When we got home, I met my brother with one neighbour of mine, which was funny.

Interviewer: What happened then?



Interviewee: My brother looked at me in the eyes and I just started crying. When I got home, everybody was quiet. My neighbour then said to me that these things happen. That's how I came to know that Pat is no more.

Interviewer: By the way you had a house of your own.

Interviewee: Our house had problems and is still having them. When Pat was sick, after some time, he ended up not getting paid, and we could not pay the bond. He was paid off at his work but that amount could not cover the balance of the bond. That was stressful for both of us. It was not helping because it made him sicker. We then decided to buy a cheaper house with what we had. That house was still to be built. We signed the papers and come to an agreement. After that, the bank agreed to sell us the house we occupied and owned for the same amount that we agreed on with the other contractor. Then the other problem arose. That contractor is still refusing to give us our money back yet they agreed to pay it to the bank. I really don't know what is happening.

Interviewer: Now what are you planning to do with that?

Interviewee: I'm planning to take him to court. It's too long now. He takes advantage of the fact that I am a woman and worst of all, widowed.

Interviewer: Are you able to pay the bond now?

Interviewee: I'm not. I don't know because I'm supposed to be renting my own house. Can you imagine how much it is a month, but the bank said I shouldn't worry. All that they need is a proof that the money is with that contractor, who agreed with the bank. This is what happened. The contractor bought that house from the bank. I think It is now between the contractor and the bank, I want to believe. This has to be sorted out because it is now a bother to me. I'm not sure right now if I have a house or not. This should be bothering Pat wherever he is. It's not fair. Everything was coming okay; the problem is a human being and money. Money is evil.

Interviewer: Tell me, before Pat passed away, were you getting enough support?

Interviewee: I used to live with my siblings. His family did not. They would only come when they hear that he is really struggling. But from the time he started getting sick, they only came twice.

Interviewer: Was he not in good terms with them?



Interviewee: They were in good terms. He ended up not caring about whether they come to see him or not. It's sad. I remember one brother of his came to visit. When he was about to leave, Pat persuaded him to stay another day and he refused. It hurt him. His mother wanted to come and visit but could not because he depended on people to bring her. She was too old to come by herself. She is a good person. The few times she came she fought with everybody to bring her. Apparently she could not even sleep at night. She also used to call and check on us. He never used to, except before he was last admitted at the hospital, he said to my sister that he was planning to go home. We even thought he was talking about his parents' house. He then said he was going to his home where he came from when he came to this world.

Interviewer: Where else were you both getting support?

Interviewee: The church really supported us. They would come for prayers. Even now on father's day, my priest and his wife will take all the widows out for lunch, and it's nice.

Interviewer: What happened immediately after he passed away?

Interviewee: I asked myself questions that I could not answer. I was hoping that someone would tell me that it was a joke. I was confused. I would cry, keep quiet; asked myself questions, it was really tough. I could not even fall asleep and, when I stand up, I felt weak like I could fall, and had no energy.

Interviewer: Who got him from the hospital?

Interviewee: It was his brother and one of his relatives. He died on a Thursday and buried on a Saturday. I was worried about what was happening in the kitchen because I had to stay in my bedroom flat on the mattress. But my siblings were present looking after everything in the house.

Interviewer: When did your in-laws come to your house?

Interviewee: His sister was there with us when Pat passed away. She left the following day back to the Free State, and came back again on Saturday. It just did not make sense now that she was there already. We were even asking ourselves what she went to fetch back home. I mean she could have called home and asked them to bring her extra clothes. She came back with her mother and brothers. I'm in good terms with one daughter in-law because we once stayed together.



Interviewer: How did they help you regarding the funeral arrangements?

Interviewee: Nothing, nothing. Knowing very well that Pat was not earning a living. I was actually helped by Pat's local relatives who knew the kind of person that he was. He was very sociable and warm. He used to help people. The only thing that is family of origin was looking at was what they were going to take with them when they went back home.

Interviewer: What were they interested in?

Interviewee: Furniture and all. In the first place, they wanted Pat to be buried in the Free State so that they could claim everything in his name, including the car.

Interviewer: Were you not legally married?

Interviewee: We were. Married or not they wanted everything. I did not understand what the main issue was with our car. I heard later that when his sister came before Pat passed away, she was sent to get the car. She can drive. She did not say anything because the day Pat passed away was the day that she was supposed to leave.

Interviewer: Why the greed?

Interviewee: I don't know but my sister overheard them saying that I don't have children with Pat. I got married with two children of my own, and I miscarried twins in my marriage with Pat. They were saying that outsiders could not inherit Pat's estate. In a way, they were protecting his interests. He loved them very much but his family was very greedy. Pat's brother's wife called me and warned me about them. She advised me to make sure I keep the car keys to myself and locked the garage because they had planned to go back home driving Pat's car. I kept in with me all the time. Fortunately my neighbour offered me his car to run errands with it. I opened the garage to be used for storage but locked the car. In fact, the car was supposed to go for service and Pat's sister came all the way from the Free State with a car mechanic specially to service the car. I refused and it did not sit well with them. I again refused because I suspected that they could even steal the car parts, do something to the car or even take it away when I was still trying to deal with my loss.

Interviewer: Did you have a night vigil?

Interviewee: Yes, but the service was at home because it was during the Easter weekend and the church was occupied.



Interviewer: How did the funeral go?

Interviewee: It went well. After the funeral the very day people contribute money for me to do whatever I should and would need afterwards. The usual collection like during the church service. His sister was receiving it and took it all for herself. It's a family tradition for family members to contribute besides the community's. I did not think his sister would take that money for herself, but it's bad luck. If they took the money that did not belong to them, I'm asking myself if they will afford to buy the cow for my cleansing. They were spiting me and leave me empty handed. I will have to buy it myself.

Interviewer: Did you go through any rituals?

Interviewee: The corpse slept over at home. In fact, late Friday morning, I felt very anxious, only to realise that it was because he was coming home that evening. I was very down spirited the whole day. In no time, I happened to see the undertaker outside with the coffin, and I started crying, thinking to my self that I would never see him alive again. I was told not to cry, can you imagine. He was brought in the bedroom and it was like a dream and seeing him there was a torture. I could not believe that he was in there quiet, and would never talk ever again. I was not sure whether to open the coffin and look at him or not, because when he got home that evening, I did not want to look at him. I was told to sit on his head side and his mother on the feet side, with candles lit around the coffin the whole night. The fact that he laid quietly next to me I could not sleep. We were with other old ladies in the bedroom the whole night. As a result right now, hearing that somebody I know passed away, it really affects me. When the corpse got into the bedroom, his sister sprinkled water in the bedroom. Why, I don't know. She did that again when the coffin left the room. My family of origin and I were disapproving and did not trust her because according to tradition, she should have asked permission from me. We never practised such things in our house. You can't just come into somebody's house and do funny things. It would have been different if they could have explained to me that it is their way of doing things and ask for permission. What is important to me is to erect a beautiful memorial for him. That will help me with closure. I will just tell his family when the unveiling will be.

Interviewer: What happened in that room the whole night?

Interviewee: Nothing. We sat there awake. I was not even allowed to go to the toilet. When I needed to go to the toilet, I was given a potty and that was it. I could only get out the next morning. Even then it was because all the women who spent the night with me in the bedroom were asked to walk out for the older males to prepare him. That was the time I managed to bath.

What preparation, I did not know and could not ask because all those people were related to him and not me. If it were my relatives, I would have asked because I did not even understand why I, as his wife should also walk out. I was very unhappy with that. What was it, as his wife, I did not know about him? In fact, I should have been the one person who should have been preparing him. Besides, what was to be prepared that I should not do myself? When I bathed, my sister was there with me. Whatever I ate, my sister had to dish out for me and nobody else. I did not trust his family but mine. That's how it's done. You choose who ever you trust to do all that for you.

Interviewer: What was it that those men were doing in the room with the corpse?

Interviewee: I still do not know even today. What I know is that I was asked to take out clothes that I would like him to be put on and I gave them. I want to believe that they were dressing him. I still don't understand why they were not taken to the undertaker to do all that, especially that I was not allowed in. It was only men from his side of the family, and not mine. I had to wait outside for them to finish. Can you imagine? I felt like I did not own him but his family. We were later allowed in. By then the coffin was open and I was allowed to look at him. I remember peeping and thereafter, I don't know what happened. I remember recovering with people holding me. I had my own clothes on that day. Something funny happened that morning. They showed me their own traditional healer who they say was supposed to wash the corpse himself and take that water to cleanse me. That is witchcraft at its best. I refused and pushed him away. That I was not going to allow because I don't even know him. On top of that allow him to touch my husband. They were angry with me and I did not care.

Interviewer: What happened the following day?

Interviewee: The morning following the day of the funeral (Sunday) Pat's clothes were given away. Everybody was there, especially his family. I only took two items. The eldest daughter in-law dressed me in these black clothes that you see me with. I just sat there quietly like a sheep, obliging to that procedure. They were just being spiteful because even before the day of the funeral, they were busy saying that whether I like it or not I will put them on. The only thing left now is the cleansing when I take off these black clothes by my family. They did not do anything to me regarding rituals. I am pleased with that because I don't trust them anyway. They did not even cut my hair.

Interviewer: What is really done during the cleansing ceremony?

Interviewee: I don't know. I will see when I get there. However, I witnessed Pat's aunt's cleansing. She got there on a Friday at her parent's house. She also had black clothes on. She stayed in Soweto. I don't know because some people say you are cleansed in a river, some say

in rural areas you are cleansed in the kraal. I don't know, but she was bathed outside the house and not inside. You first bath like normal in the house. In the water they put herbs and, because my family will cleanse me I will definitely ask. According to the custom, when I take off these clothes, my in-laws are supposed to buy a cow that will be slaughtered and the intestine contents will be used in the cleansing. That will be mixed with the water that I will be cleansed with, including other herbs. They would give me the money for the cow when I go home, and one of them will go with me. They will be waiting for me at my house. I am expected to bring home for them half of the cow that was slaughtered. My worry is I can't leave them alone in my house. I think I will talk to my sister whom they fear to look after the house for me. I will however lock my bedroom and all my valuables. My family of origin is supposed to cleanse me. I wanted to take my husband's car but apparently I can't. My mother will have to hire a car for me, and I will lock my car in the garage so that his family must never come near it. I don't trust them because they wanted it. What should happen is that I can drive home but my car is not supposed to stay there. It has to be brought back home and my mother has to find a way of taking me back home. My cousin will take me and back. I'm not going to stay long. I will be cleansed early on Saturday morning and these black clothes will be burnt. I will then put on brand new clothes and a blanket that my mother would have bought for me. I think those herbs smell and I'm not supposed to bath afterwards, I will stay with that smell the whole day. My hair will also be cut and have no say about it. Then I go back home with half of that cow and the meat will be cooked for his family.

Interviewer: Have you ever thought about how you may feel during your cleansing ceremony?

Interviewee: Yes I have. Just as much as I don't like these black clothes I'm not keen to take them off because they feel like part of Pat. It may feel like I'm abandoning him, after six months. I'm just thinking, I don't know. I will cross that bridge when I get there. I witnessed my mother going through that with my father. We saw the cow and it was hurting for me and I even cried because when the cow was slaughtered, it felt like they were killing my father. It took us back. It should have been worse for my mother.

Interviewer: How did you feel when they were busy taking Pat's clothes for themselves?

Interviewee: They were even fighting for them. It was so embarrassing. I was really hurt. One of Pat's sisters called Pat's younger brother to come choose whatever he liked and he refused, saying that he was not Pat's favourite and won't participate in the ritual. They were exposing themselves to everybody that they were not one.

Interviewer: What are your experiences of the black clothes?



Interviewee: One day I was with one lady in town and there was this man coming towards me. He looked at me and screamed. Maybe he did not expect to see a widow in black. Maybe is because most people don't put black anymore, or maybe someone close to her, like her mother, wore it and is no more. Maybe he thought he was seeing his late mother, I don't know. You learn a lot of things with these black clothes. I would get into a taxi and sit down. The taxi driver would tell me in front of everybody to go sit right at the back. When I sit down the person next to me would move as far away from me as possible. It hurts. When I have to pay, some passengers would not want to pass money forward, and some drivers would not want to touch my money. One even told me that he was doing me a favour to let me in his taxi because nobody would. When I walk around people would look at me, some feeling pity for me. Some people you were used to before distance themselves. Maybe they think that I will take their husbands, when the very husbands are still the same. The poor husbands sometimes avoid greeting me because of their wives. It hurts and always reminds you of your situation. When I have nowhere to go, instead of putting on the black clothes, I stay in my pyjamas to take a break from these clothes. I think it also takes back those who went through this loss before. My in-laws are very spiteful and cruel. They were telling everybody who would listen that I would put on black whether I like it or not. Unfortunately Pat did not tell them his wishes about these black clothes. They even came too early for the funeral. It was expensive for me to feed them especially because they were not even helping in any way. If it was not because of Pat's relatives in helping I don't know what could have happened. Neighbours contributed money for this and that because Pat was very helpful and reliable to others.

Interviewer: How did you manage with all the financial problems that you had with Pat?

Interviewee: Oh, oh, oh, I was at people's mercy. Maybe that was the reason why my in-laws were so nasty and wanted him to be buried at his parents' home. I refused even though I did not know where I would get the money. But they knew that he wanted to be buried where we stayed. He never even used to stay more than two days at his parents' house. Those people are spiteful. His mother insisted that he be buried where he stayed. She is very sweet and fair. According to her, she would be staying with us it's just that she does not like Johannesburg. His relatives who stayed in Soweto helped me. Those were the people who lived with us and knew Pat for his goodness. They bought the coffin. They just asked me to choose, which was very difficult because I had nothing and could not choose what I like for him. I depended on them and was at their mercy. I was hurting. My sister in-law was also there. Maybe she was sent to see whether I have money to buy my husband a coffin or not. There was no need for her to be there. I was asked to choose and that was difficult because only a person with money could choose. One of them chose one, which to me, was acceptable but not there yet. What would I have said?



Interviewer: How do you cope right now?

Interviewee: I sometimes sit on my own asking myself whether I would cope better with time without him. I sometimes still cannot believe that he is gone forever and I will never see him ever again in my lifetime. But what I liked about him is that he did not believe in debts. We did not owe anyone. God is great because I've learnt that I can't trust people because they change, although people are not the same. It was tough even before he passed away because he was not working and he never allowed me to work. He believed that it was his role to provide for me. If I work means he was failing me as my husband. We used to live on people's donations. It did not sit well with him. He used to refuse those donations. People used to give me without his awareness. The church is also helping. It's just that when I have to walk into someone's house, I always imagine if I do, and the man of the house dies, I will be blamed. You know, after seeing you for therapy, I can sleep. Before then, I could not. I would sit the whole night wide-awake with headaches, lack of appetite, preoccupied and all. You really helped me. Even one widow at our church two weeks ago was asking me how I manage to function because she sees me as coping. I told her about you and she asked me what you to me. I just encouraged her to come and experience for herself. I gave her your number. The church is also of great help. On father's day, our priest and his wife took three of us (widows) out for lunch. It felt so good because we even shared our experiences. They did not believe that I was coping the way I did. I also told them about you. The following Sunday, the priest talked about psychotherapy at church which, to most people was something new. He asked me to tell the congregation my experiences with you. I also did not know anything about psychologists and what they do. I assumed them to be similar to social workers. There were some who knew you for different issues and think highly of you. I felt so important.

Interviewer: Did Pat ever talked about death with you?

Interviewee: He never used to, except before he was last admitted at the hospital, he said to my sister that he was planning to go home. We even thought he was talking about his parents' house. He then said he was going to his home where he came from when he came to this world. We laughed about it and left it there. That was a month before he died. At the hospital he looked healthy because I even estimated a week before he would be discharged. I remember that week I slept well looking forward to the following week.

Interviewer: Have you ever dreamt him?

Interviewee: Yes. He was driving his car, taking visitors somewhere with him.



Interviewer: Have you ever lost anybody close to you in your childhood and adulthood?

Interviewee: My father at about fifteen, that's all. In adulthood was Pat.

Interviewer: How did you meet with Pat?

Interviewee: We met in the Free State. I already had two sons then with the same man. What I did not like about him was that he listened to his family too much. I just left him without notice. I then continued with Pat but when he started talking marriage he discouraged me because I was not there yet, as I had children, two years and five. With time, he convinced me and we got married, and he accepted my children although my mother wanted the children. We came to a compromise and she stayed with the older one and I took the baby. We were very close. You know, if he could come back from work and not find me at home, he would be very unhappy and abandoned. He wanted to come home and see me open the door for him. He did not want me to work, saying that he can take care of me. He was very dependent on me. He would always tell me that I'm all that he has.

Interviewer: What is your main problem right now?

Interviewee: It's my house. The little that I have I think I will have to use it to pay off the house because the bank is now sending people to come and view the house. I see myself taken out of the house. Even last month people came. I'm uncomfortable now because when I'm not home, I get worried about those people. One day I will find my possessions out of the house. I will just have to take the builder who took our money to court. He takes advantage of me now that I'm widowed. I'm now worse than before I came for therapy. I had planned to use the little that I have to pay for my children's school fees. I am now selling stuff to make money for my children and not the house that should have been paid off. This problem really causes me headaches. It is now over year. When I think that my husband did not even enjoy it. Doing that to a widow is all bad luck. When I start thinking about it, I get miserable and people around me become uncomfortable. I will cry the whole day and even start blaming the deceased. It's not fair to people who are supportive to me. I don't like it either. I am now weaker than before because of this.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Interviewer: How did the cleansing go?

Interviewee: I was cleansed but my in-laws did not do what they were supposed to do. They were supposed to buy a cow for the slaughtering but did not. My family of origin had to do it. A



week before the cleansing my sister in-law called and ask about the arrangements and told me about her money problems. She wanted me to borrow money for the cow when it was supposed to do all of that. She now suggested that my worst enemy should take me to my parents home and I refused, telling her that she must tell that person that I don't want to see her near my house because she will start what she did at my husband's funeral, being rude. I told her that the fact that I dislike her is not a secret and she must tell her just that. Apparently my sister in-law collects her parents' pension grant monthly, and my mother in-law suggested that she put two hundred rands every month in preparation for my cleansing. It would seem like she did not do that but instead, used that money for herself and her family. That person is a professional teacher. It was discovered that that sister in-law used her parents' money for the cow. She then called me and asked me to borrow money for my cleansing because she was expecting a cheque from her employer and had not received it. That really destroyed my mother in-law but still continued to deceive her parents and reassured them that she had the money.

Interviewer: What did you do about that?

Interviewee: My mother understood the kind of people they are. They were prepared for that. The day I left for my parents' house in the Free State, my in-laws were supposed to be there a day before to burn my black clothes so that I could leave with ordinary clothes on. I could not leave without the burning of my black clothes. I could not go home with them on.

Interviewer: Who burnt them for you?

Interviewee: Because they were not there, my husband's cousin did. That is supposed to be done at sunset. When they were burning them, I became emotional like I was abandoning my husband. I felt like that although I was happy to know that I will be back to my old self. Before then I was anxious and did not know how I will feel about it. The ashes were taken and thrown into the river nearby.

Interviewer: How did you feel in your normal clothes?

Interviewee: I asked myself questions. For example, what was the purpose of those clothes? When I put my ordinary clothes, a thought that came to mind was that the last time I had them on was when Pat was still alive. It was painful. Two days before the burning of clothes I went to the grave to tell him about it. When I got to the cemetery, I could not find the grave. I ended up asking help from the caretaker. Remember that the last time I was there was the day of the funeral. They gave me the wrong grave number and I realised that. I called home to double check. I was able to identify it through my mug that was on the grave. It was hurting. I was crying, re-experiencing exactly what I went through emotionally at his funeral. I then went to the Free State. My

husband's cousin drove me there. When we got there, his cousin told my mother that my in-laws did not give him money, and she understood because that was what she was expecting because, on the basis of what she witnessed at the funeral, she did not expect them to do what they were expected to do for me when they could not do for their own family member, meaning my husband.

Interviewer: What happened thereafter?

Interviewee: I got home Thursday evening. On Friday morning, the cow was there. When I saw it I cried so much because it reminded me the day before the funeral when the cow for the funeral got home. It was slaughtered Friday before sunset. I also realised that black clothes are heavy because they always remind you of the reason why you had them on. When you take them off in the evening you feel light. In the evening I was shown the cow and it felt like it was going to be slaughtered for the funeral. I was so much and saw my mother also crying. It was very difficult. After that I was not allowed into the house. I had to wait there while it was slaughtered. I had to watch the whole process. They then took what was in the cow's stomach, gall and some herbs and mix them all. Then my sister, cousin and aunt took me to the nearby river. They also took the new clothes that my mother bought me. The ones I had on were to be left at home and never wear them again.

Interviewer: What happened at the river?

Interviewee: When we got there, I had to strip naked and shaved me all the hair on my body. I mean everywhere. Can you imagine standing naked in front of people doing you all that. Apparently they were cleaning me, making me pure.

Interviewer: What did the shaving mean?

Interviewee: I don't know and I never asked. I was put in the river, in a cold and rainy evening. I was shivering. The stomach contents, gall and herbs mixture was in the bucket. They pour me with that from the head down, whilst still rubbing that on my body and I nearly gasped. They then took the water from the river and washed. It was so itchy and I was not supposed to bath when we got home until the following morning. Just as much as I was relieved, I also felt sad when I think of the reason behind that ritual. I never believed that I could go through that. The following day when I had to leave, I cried and saw my mother crying also, feeling pity for me. My uncle then took me back home in the afternoon. I was given new clothes from every member of my family

Interviewer: What happened to the slaughtered cow?

Interviewee: I came back with the other half of the cow to give it to my in-laws. When I got home I found my sister in-law. She was so embarrassed and I just told her that she will take their half of the cow to her parents. The cow that they were supposed to have bought. They don't call me anymore. It's even better now that they don't.

Interviewer: What happened when you got home?

Interviewee: The way it is done, I had to show everybody the clothes that I was bought and give my in-laws their part of the cow. Part of it was cooked for whoever was there to welcome me back home. I found my sister in-law at home and my uncle explained to her that my mother understood that my mother in-law is a pensioner and might not have afforded to buy the cow. I discovered later that my husband's parents waited for her to drive them to my place and she was nowhere to be found. Even today, my mother in-law is sick today because of the way her son's funeral was conducted, and now the cleansing. Anyway I went to see them two months ago because she wanted to see me. Both of them were happy to see me. When she saw me she cried so much. When I left she cried again. Her health is affected.

PARTICIPANT FIVE

Interviewer: What was your husband suffering from?

Interviewee: He had high blood pressure and diabetes, but they were all controlled. He was up and about and you would not tell that he was sick. The problem came on Christmas day of 2005. We always used to spend Christmas day with my sister at her house. He used to enjoy himself at my sister's house because it's open and peaceful. That day (Christmas day), he refused to join me and decided to spend it with his sister whom I know that she takes alcohol like a horse. As a result, I did not want him to visit her but he insisted. Unfortunately for him on that day, he had a problem with his car and had to use public transport to go to his sister, and I went to my sister alone. He called me at about six o'clock in the evening to check if I arrived safely at my sister's, and promised to come and get me later. He did not sound sober on the phone and discouraged him from coming over. He later called, telling me that he wanted to go home and I advised him to sleep over at her sister's place, for his own safety. However, according to his nieces, he never slept, never ate but drank with his sister the whole day and night. I was told that she had bought more liquor than food for Christmas day. I called him on my way back home that very evening, and his niece suggested that I should come and see how he was. I called again when I got home

and was told that his sister had locked herself in her bedroom, leaving my husband was sick and vomiting. At that time, I was already at home waiting for him. I was angry because she (his sister) is a qualified nurse who should know the needs of a diabetic, and what needed to be done when he was sick. I however suggested that they rush him to the clinic (private) and would meet them there, but that did not happen. Instead, they only brought him home very late that night. I then asked his sister to explain to me why, as a nurse, could let a diabetic keep on taking alcohol without food and the answer I got was that my husband was not the only diabetic in Soweto who takes alcohol without food. What made me angry and hurting most was that, when my husband got home, he asked for food and I gave him and he went to sleep. I promised him that I would take him to hospital. The following morning I asked him to prepare himself to go to the hospital and he refused, saying that the last time he was there his sister embarrassed him when she screamed at the hospital staff, questioning them about this and that. In a way telling them that she is also a nurse. I feel that his sister, because her mother left her with her house when she died, she does not know what to do with her money and ends up spending it on liquor.

Interviewer: It seems as if his sister had no interest in his health.

Interviewee: She told me that he is also her brother. I feel that she was using her brother as a weapon against me. However, my husband promised that he would never take alcohol again, because his liver was also getting affected.

Interviewer: Was he employed?

Interviewee: He had been retrenched for five years by the time he died. I think his being unemployed contributed a lot to his drinking, because not providing for the family bothered him. We had two cars and he suggested that we should sell his to reduce the financial strain because we still had the mortgage to manage. To make him feel supported, I decided rather to sell mine (car). On the 28th of December, he woke up very early, in the early hours of the morning, at about three o'clock, switched on the lights, the whole house. Before then, I felt like there was somebody standing next to me while I was asleep. When I woke up I saw him next to me and I screamed, and he asked me if I'm not going to work. I work for a company that manufactures dental equipment, majoring in credit control. I was a nurse before. I told him that I am not going to work. He knew that, and I fell asleep again. Normally I'm a very light sleeper but that morning I deeply fell asleep again. When I woke up, he was fast asleep, and I woke him up asking him if I could make him tea. He answered me with his eyes closed, and every time I looked at him he would close them. He then woke up and we brushed our teeth, poured him a soft drink, and asked for

breakfast. He did not look good that morning and would go to the toilet time and again. He seemed to have urine retention problem, avoiding me.

Interviewer: Don't you think that he was scared of something to happen?

Interviewee: He was and I did not know why he did not say. My husband was scared of death because every time I suggest that we should draft a Will, he would refuse, and walk away.

Interviewer: What happened after breakfast?

Interviewee: He went to the bathroom to have a bath, and later called me and asked me to help him bath, which I did although it was unusual. When finished and had to put on his clothes, he put on short pants, and later his pyjamas. In the afternoon, he decided to go to the toilet. Whilst in there, he opened the tap to make noise so that I should not hear him when he urinated. But because that was painful he called me for help. I saw concentrated glucose in the toilet bowl, which was a bad sign of his insulin level. I called his sister to come and take him to hospital, as she was the cause of all that. She came three hours later, slowly coming into the house. At the time, his glucose and blood pressure were very, very high and her sister saw that as not that bad. I was very angry but decided not to show it. She started screaming at her brother, telling him to make it quick.

Interviewer: Where were you taking him?

Interviewee: His sister decided to take him to her family doctor because most doctors were on holiday. When we got there, she refused me entry, insisting that only her and her brother would go in. She went in with my husband, because I did not want to cause a scene. Hardly ten minutes in, they came out with my husband walking in front. I then asked the doctor what the problem was and, before he could answer, she answered rudely, telling me that my husband was about to get a heart failure. The doctor looked at her, and then me without saying anything.

Interviewer: How was your husband then?

Interviewee: He was walking by himself without help but what her sister said, and how she said it was to finish his brother. I then suggested that we should take him to a public hospital and the sister screamed and rudely refused. We then went to another private clinic nearby. I also suggested to her that she should get a referral letter from that doctor so that in the meantime, the

doctor could call that clinic to make the hospital and physician aware that we were on our way, and it was an emergency. She again screamed at me and drove away.

Interviewer: How did you feel?

Interviewee: I was hurting, disrespected and worried about my husband's deteriorating condition. I could tell that he was getting worse and worse. When we got there, I rushed for the wheelchair, put him on it, covered his legs and pushed him in and let her fill in the admission form. I was in the ward when she came and told me that I must go and complete the form because she did not know her brother's date of birth and address. I could not believe it.

Interviewer: What happened next?

Interviewee: The physician came and wanted to talk to one of us. She told the doctor that she was his sister, she is a nurse and she would not leave the room. The doctor then told us to decide and I walked out. I walked in later and asked my husband how he was feeling, covering his legs. He told me that he felt better than earlier. What was puzzling me was the fact that the previous doctor diagnosed eminent heart failure and the one we were with at the time diagnosed pneumonia. That was a big question mark with pneumonia in mid-summer. He was not coughing, no sputum, nothing. He was only complaining about stomach pains, which I thought to be retention. I was confused but not thinking about death.

Interviewer: Where was his sister at the time?

Interviewee: She was sitting next to him but giving him her back like she wanted nothing to do with him, let alone me. I even started thinking that she knew something that I did not know, probably poisoning his drink on Christmas day.

Interviewer: Was there an element of mistrust from your side?

Interviewee: Of course yes, considering her behaviour from Christmas day. Encouraging a diabetic to take alcohol without food the whole day, not responding to him when he was vomiting the following day but instead, locking herself in her room, refusal to me to be present when my husband was consulting with both doctors, and giving him her back at the hospital. I saw all of that as an admission of guilt about something that probably she alone knew. You know, I even thought that after my cleansing, I would open a case of murder but because that is not me. I will leave it the way it is. She will pay in God's own way.



Interviewer: How long were you at the hospital?

Interviewee: We were there for about three hours. He was asking me for water and not his sister. He was sweating a lot and tried to wipe him. We were told to wait for another physician for second opinion. I was getting impatient and starting to panic, and he was getting restless.

Interviewer: What was his sister doing at that time?

Interviewee: She stood up and wanted to go home, getting “bored”, standing at the door. I was unsure of what to do then and asked him if I should stay. He suggested that I should go and come see him the following day and asked me to bring him his wristwatch. I then took the hospital telephone number and went home. Fifteen minutes later the phone rang, it was the hospital. The doctor asked me if I was alone and I started to panic. He screamed at me, telling me impatiently that I should not panic and I screamed and fainted. My neighbours apparently heard my scream and came running. One of them picked up the phone and answered. The doctor asked to talk to me again and he told me that he tried to resuscitate my husband but he failed. He was so rude. It was an Indian doctor. You know how Indians are. You know it is funny that when someone is about to die I can tell but that time I just could not. I did not think of death when it came to my husband. I blame my sister in-law for my husband’s death.

Interviewer: How can you define you husband and his sister’s relationship?

Interviewee: Let me tell you their family history. He grew up in Lesotho with his father and paternal grandmother. Although my mother in-law did not tell me clearly, it seemed as if she was never married to that man although she had two children with him, meaning my husband as the elder one, and then his sister. Both their names are Sotho. He only met his sister when he was nineteen years old. It seemed as if their mother in Soweto brought up the sister. Why their mother gave him away to be brought up by his father I do not know. Their married did get married to another man, and let the two to use her maiden name, which is Zulu. He was using a Sotho surname in Lesotho but his mother changed it when she abducted him from Lesotho. That is why, when their mother made rituals at home, would slaughter a goat (which is a Zulu tradition) for her Zulu family, and a sheep (which is for all other tribes), which in that case, was for her Sotho children.

Interviewer: Don’t you think the two siblings, in their own unusual way, were trying to bond and define their relationship? Also, what if there were family secrets that they had which you husband might not have been told about.

Interviewee: Maybe, but if my husband knew them, he would have told me.

My mother in-law once told me about how she went to abduct my husband from Lesotho. She told me that she dreamt my husband's grandmother in Lesotho thrice, telling her that my husband had no one to look after because both her (my husband's grandmother) and his father had died. Suggesting that she must go to Lesotho and get him. According to her (mother in-law), she did nothing about that because she was too much into alcohol. Years later she decided to go to Lesotho and found my husband. At the time, he was nineteen, and looking after his late father's flock, and staying in the mountains. She then persuaded him to come to Johannesburg with her because he was not attending school anymore. He refused, saying that he was looking after the flock that his father left him. He left school in Standard nine, when everybody was attending school. She then asked him to go to town with her so that she could buy him clothes. That is how she abducted him, and changed his surname to that of his mother. His mother however, asked us to change our surname to that of his father. It is clear that their relationship (sibling) was distant, and probably tried to be closer through alcohol.

Interviewer: What happened after the news of your husband's death?

Interviewee: I first called his sister and her daughter picked up the call. Apparently she did not want to come to the phone until she was told that it was I on the line. I told her that his brother had passed away. I think she knew what she had done, because the two of them (brother and sister) sat and drank the whole day. She knew that her brother should not be drinking because of his health.

Interviewer: How did you really feel about that?

Interviewee: I have no forgiveness for her. What irritated me most was the fact that she did not want to help us with transport. Above all, in the middle of the night, with immediate family, including my sister, we heard a scream in the other bedroom. When people went to check, they found my sister in-law naked in the dark, doing something and wanted to touch my niece's head. She (sister in-law) was so embarrassed, trying to explain to everybody something that was unexplainable. She then explained to me that she was checking if the doors were locked, and I did not respond.

Interviewer: Was your sister in-law staying with you in your bedroom?

Interviewee: Yes. She would sit at the one end of the mattress and I would sit at the other end. What was scaring me also was that time and again she would have a small packet in her hands,

rubbing her hands with it. I eventually asked her what that meant. She could not answer me. The next thing she would be burning herbs in my bedroom with everybody watching. Burning them on the carpet. My sister suggested that we should pray, and later told my sister in-law off. My carpet and underfeld are burnt.

Interviewer: What happened thereafter?

Interviewee: We later left to go and choose a coffin and my sister in-law insisted that she wanted to come with us. When we got there, she wanted to choose the coffin and I told her to stay at the reception area. You know, I was at peace with myself when I chose my husband's coffin without her next to me. When I went to my insurance company to pay for the coffin, I was told that the computers were down and, as a result they could not pay out. Fortunately my sister's son had left money for me and I used it for the coffin. My family of origin in Kimberley was struggling to get transport because their car could not start. They tried to get other people to drive them to Johannesburg but failed. Everything was just not working. The day before my husband was to come home, his sister told me that I must go and prepare him at the mortuary. I refused because I know that it is not done. Only males prepare a male corpse. Again, I overheard them (my sister in-law and her cousins) talking, thinking that I was asleep, saying that they must force me to go and prepare my husband so that I would also die. I refused to do that. I was later told that they (my sister in-law and her cousins) were at the mortuary earlier to do something to the corpse. I never knew and understood what they did.

Interviewer: I do not understand. Does the undertaker allow anyone to come in and do as they (sister in-law and cousins) like with the corpse?

Interviewee: I do not know. Do you know what they did? They changed the coffin and choose the one, which was five thousand rand more expensive just to spite me. Their explanation was that my husband was too big to fit into the coffin I chose, and I must go and pay five thousand rands. I had a mortgage to pay, run the funeral and all. When I went to pay the undertaker she refused to come with me.

Interviewer: Did the corpse come overnight at home?

Interviewee: Yes. I was alone in that room with the corpse. They (sister in-law and her cousins) refused to join me, because culturally, as my husband is her brother, they should have been there with me. Instead, they decided to stay in one of the bedrooms in which they did not allow anyone. I never knew what they were scared of, and what they were doing in there the whole night.



Interviewer: How did you feel when the corpse arrived?

Interviewee: That moment is a very silent moment. It was painful. What came to mind was that he left the house to hospital walking without help. When we left home, he looked at me and thanked me for having been there for him. It's only now that I remember some of the things that were happening then, and what they could have meant. Sitting there upright the whole night next to that box with my husband in it was torture. That tradition can come to an end. It is not helping anyone. I am the first in my family to put on black clothes and follow some of those rituals.

Interviewer: How did you reconcile what you were ordered to do and how you were brought up?

Interviewee: You know, I have now accepted these black clothes, unlike before. Before, I did not know how to be to people and would at times avoid them. It was only after a friend of mine advised me to start getting used to it and interact with people because I would struggle when I have to go back to work. To think that I asked my in-laws if I could have a coloured African traditional material dress and they refused. Instead I was told that my husband was not a boy and whether I like it or not I would put on black. They were even telling their other relatives that my family behave like white people, as they did not practice traditional rituals.

Interviewer: They were fighting you.

Interviewee: Of course yes. When they came to cleanse my children it was worse. They were insulting me, and I just kept quiet. My sister in-law suggested that we must go to my husband's grave and let him know that his children would be cleansed, and I refused. I refused because during her mother's cleansing none of that was done. She then told one of my neighbours that she was done with me she does not care whether I put that dress for three years it was none of her business. I forgot to tell you something important. After the funeral, my sister in-law called me asking for forgiveness. I asked her forgiveness regarding what? She said forgiveness for being irresponsible by drinking liquor with my husband and I did not answer her but dropped the phone because I told her that I would never ever talk to her. She called again asking for the meat (the left over of the funeral). The way I was stupid, I would give her (sister in-law) money to buy this and that like, for example, five thousand rand to go and buy an ox for the funeral. I discovered late that she bought half of an ox and took the rest for herself without telling me. She used the rest to buy liquor. She just wanted to embarrass me. She was overheard saying that it was her brother's money. She was letting me down.

Interviewer: When did you put on the black clothes?

Interviewee: I was told by them to put it on just before the funeral service started, about a year ago. The dress was up to the ankles with big arms, telling me that I will put it on whether I like it or not. They were looking at me laughing. The apron was up to my feet. My children saw that and started crying. Now days after the funeral my friends came over and joking about the dress to lighten the atmosphere saying that my dress suggested that my husband had two wives because two people could be comfortable in it together. If I did not hold that dress up I could have fallen. I did not get support from them.

Interviewer: Did you walk around with it on?

Interviewee: No I did not because when I was in a taxi to work, people would collapse, saying that there was something done to my dress. Five people that I did not even know said that to me. With time it started bothering me and I bought a black material for someone to make a decent dress for me. When she had to give away my husband's clothes, she decided to take them home with her. I asked for my husband's shirts, three of them and I just took them.

Interviewer: Why were you succumbing to her like that?

Interviewee: I do not know. I think it was because the herb she always had in her hands. I asked her about it and she never answered me but instead, she went outside the house, made fire and burnt the herb. The smell was so overwhelming we had to close the windows, in summer.

Interviewer: How do people react to your black clothes?

Interviewee: People avoid me and sit as far away as possible from me. Now my family does not know what to do and how to go about cleansing me because we do not cleanse in my family of origin. They asked around and were told that I can only do the cleansing in winter. It will be in March, meaning fourteen months in these black clothes. Apparently I am not supposed to unveil my husband's tombstone with black clothes on. You know my husband always asked me that if he could die before me I must erect the tombstone the same time. It did not happen that way because he died during the festive holidays. Arranging the tombstone ceremony will heal me because I will be running it and doing what I know he wanted. I had planned the unveiling for May. Now my problem right now is how am I going to tell my husband's family about the unveiling ceremony because I have to. I think I will just post them invitation cards. I do not care whether his relatives attend the ceremony or not.



Interviewer: How were your colleagues at work?

Interviewee: They were very supportive. My boss gave me ten thousand rands for the funeral. When I went to him to arrange the payments, he was surprised because, according to him, giving me the financial support he thought I needed. He would even when I was still at home just checking on me. The church was also very supportive. The church even ran a memorial service. The church leader even asked my sister-in-law and her relatives to go and sit outside.

Interviewer: When you saw your husband in the coffin, how did you feel?

Interviewee: He had false teeth and there was something unusual with his lips. One could see that something was put into his mouth. I was surprised to hear her sister suggesting that his false teeth must be taken out because she wanted them for herself, and I refused. Another concern that I have is that I dreamt him (husband) twice telling me that he has rested but not in peace. The first time I went to his grave was painful. I could not believe that he was deep into that hole. I found small bottles of funny stuff in them. I did not want to get near the grave. I just told myself that when the tombstone is erected, they would remove all of that.

Interviewer: Have you really started grieving his loss?

Interviewee: I am not sure because there are a lot of unfinished business. You know, one of my husband's nieces came over and was surprised that I still had black clothes on. She went and asked her mother who told her that she had nothing to do with that she must ask my sister-in-law because she did all the wrong things. I do not trust them. My sister brought me herbs to drink, telling me that people advised her that it was a way of cleansing myself internally. She bought them at an Indian shop. I just drank. The taste was horrible. I do everything for peace sake.

Interviewer: Was your husband aware of his sister's behaviour and beliefs?

Interviewee: He was aware and did not trust her because he would at times tell me that his sister is just the same as his mother, believing in witchcraft. Even when his sister would have ancestor event, he would not go. You know I was told that a week before the funeral my sister bought a goat and gave it snuff. Apparently that goat sneezed and people were laughing at what she was doing. I heard weeks after the funeral from her relatives that she told them that my husband died at home and when she got to my house she found her brother's corpse in the garage. That means I dumped his corpse in the garage. That cousin of hers even told me that she had planned to stab me with a knife. I know that she always walks around with a knife in her chest. She meant what she said. But when I tell her exactly what happened, she got embarrassed. Apparently she



had told herself that she would rather be in prison for that. You could tell that my husband did not grow up with them because he was different. Despite all of that, I really got support from people around me. I also knew that my husband appreciated me.

Interviewer: Are your parents still alive?

Interviewee: My father passed away before I got married even though I was not staying with them at the time. My mother was still alive when I got married but passed away later.

Interviewer: Did any of your parents' death affect your husband's bereavement?

Interviewee: Not really because I think the difference was the fact that my husband was one person that I spent my life with and was with him until the end, unlike my parents. I also feel and believe that a husband-wife relationship is totally different from a parent-child one.

PARTICIPANT SIX

Interviewer: When did your husband pass away?

Interviewee: It was on the 23rd of April 2006.

Interviewer: Was he sick?

Interviewee: He was sick but functional. He had high blood pressure, diabetes and swollen legs. He would have gout but when he went to the doctors he would be told that it was not. As a result, we concluded that he inherited that from her mother because she had the same problem. His legs would just lock and he would not be able to move. I would always rub him, sometimes before he got out of bed, and sometimes before he went to bed.

Interviewer: Did he have a specific treatment that he was following?

Interviewee: Yes, he had his own treatment that he got from the local clinic, and then Baragwanath.

Interviewer: Were you happy with it?



Interviewee: Yes I was because I saw a big difference at the hospital because if he complained about certain tablets, they would be changed to something else. I would even go and get his treatment for him because I wanted him to comply. He also had medical aid and as a result, had his own private doctor but for diabetes and high blood pressure he would get it from the clinic. Despite all of that, he was still able to go to work even though he then wanted to retire because of ill health. However, his employer convinced him to continue working with all the support that the company was giving him, giving him time off when he was not fine. He worked there for eighteen years as a labourer and was by then working as an administrator. He was a good husband, very understanding, very loving and generous. Even the problems we would have at home, he would handle them with love. Also, if he disapproves of something or was hurt by something that I did, he would sit me down and express his feelings. He never used to hold grudges. It would only be me who would worry about what he said and think that it would stay with him. I was, at the time, more sensitive than him because I made sure that I did not hurt him. Around the time that he was about to die, he was really short tempered, just decide to keep quiet and coming across as moody. I just could not understand what was happening. A small irritation by the children would affect him, which was something new. I interpreted that as aging or his illness. What I did not realise then was that it could have been the signs of approaching his death. He would talk about death when he was in a happy mood because he was smoking and took alcohol. That was all that we would fight about. Sometimes he would argue that when I met him he was taking alcohol and I never had a problem with that, and I would tell him that he was older and alcohol was now affecting his health. He did not understand.

Interviewer: What about his family of origin. What were their feelings about his drinking?

Interviewee: He came from a family that did not care. When I got married into that family, about twenty years ago, I had eighteen months old twins with somebody else but did not get married. He did not have a problem with that and they grew up knowing him as their father. His mother and siblings did not approve of that because they tended to discourage him. His argument was that women that he knew before were drunkards and I was a perfect woman for him. From the beginning his family did not accept me. That affected me but I told myself that I love him and would just have to accommodate my mother-in-law. I did not care about the rest of the family because she was the one I would have to deal with.

Interviewer: How many siblings did he have?

Interviewee: He had an elder brother who was his only sibling. The rest were relatives. His brother would pretend to be good to me but I could see through him, even his wife. Apparently



they (his brother and wife) were pushing my husband to get married because they were staying with my mother in-law and wanted to get their own house but did not want to leave their mother with him alone. They however did not move out when I got there. When I joined my husband at his mother's house, I came to realise that he alone had been providing for his mother and brother's family, when both the brother and his wife were employed. He was paying water and electricity, buying groceries for the whole family, fees for his brother's four children, I mean everything. Despite all of that, they would not give him food. If they did, his food would be different from theirs. They would have the best food but would give him pap and gravy. He would tell me that he only it well the first week after buying groceries. His mother would eat the same food as my husband. He also used to give his mother money every month.

Interviewer: How did he solve that problem?

Interviewee: He then told his mother that he was now married and would from then on give all his salary to me, and I would handle the budget. That's where the problem started, and we were chased out of the house. It then came out that his brother took his mother to the municipality offices and changed the ownership of the house to himself without the knowledge of my husband. In the meantime my husband knew that house to be his, extended the house to accommodate the children and me because they (his brother and wife) were supposed to move out. Above all of that, they still expected that he should improve the house further. He worked there for eighteen years as a labourer and was by then working as an administrator.

Interviewer: What happened next?

Interviewee: We had to leave and the family met to talk about that. My mother in-law told everybody that since her children were born they never had serious conflicts like that, implying that I was the cause of all that conflict. Just before we left, my brother in-law asked his mother to leave home for some time so that when he chased us out, she should not be present. He chased us out of the house in the evening, in winter and I was pregnant. We then went to my parents' house. Since then, there was tension between them and us.

Interviewer: How was their life after you had left?

Interviewee: You won't believe this. They (brother in-law and his wife) chased my mother in-law out of the house, telling her that the house was theirs. My sister in-law was claiming that our mother in-law was a witch and could not share a house with her. She forced her husband to

choose between her and his mother. He then threatened his mother with an axe, telling her that he could not stay with a witch in his house. She left to stay with relatives.

Interviewer: How long did she stay with those relatives?

Interviewee: You know, we moved into our new house and a week later, we saw my mother in-law walking in, crying and asking for forgiveness, pleading to come and stay with us. We never knew how she knew that we then had a house. I welcomed her and she stayed with us. She even died staying with us and we buried her without the assistance of my brother in-law and his wife. Even when I had given her a place to stay despite what she did to my husband, and me she was still negative. She would discriminate amongst my children. She would tell my other children with my husband that the twins were not their siblings. But because we brought them up as a family, they never came to be influenced by her attitude. The only problem was that the twins would always complain about my mother in-law having done this and that during the day when we were not home. I would then tell my husband and we would have a meeting and ask her. She would not deny and ask for forgiveness. That continued happening until she died. I made peace with myself and told myself that she never approved of me but I looked after her and buried her. Even her relatives came to ask me to be patient with her because they knew the kind of person that she was.

Interviewer: How did your husband take it?

Interviewee: I only realised later that everything that was happening in the family was affecting him but he did not show it. It was only then when he was nearing his death that, when drunk, he would talk about them. It was only after his death that I fully understood how he felt about his family of origin. When he was sober he was an angel. I even asked him to express his feelings about things that he did not like so that they could be resolved as and when they happen. He even started having an attitude to the children, all of them, being impatient with them. He would scream at them for no reason, which was unusual. When I think of it now, he was nearing his death and struggling to deal with it. I wish he could have trusted me and open up to me for moral support. You know, I was able to forgive him.

Interviewer: Was he still employed at the time?

Interviewee: Yes he was. A week before he died he did unusual things. The Monday during the Easter long weekend, he forced us to go to the cemetery to clean the graves of his father, mother and all. He was so happy that day. His health was not of the best that day, and I cleaned and



asked him to sit down and watch me clean. When we were busy talking, he started telling me how blessed he was to have a wife like me, who understands and cares for him the way I did. In the afternoon we visited my sister who had just moved into a new house and we had supper there. On our way back he decided that we should go and drop the car at home and walk to a supermarket to buy some stuff for the family. Tuesday he went to work and later that day it started raining and I was worried that he would get wet and his condition would deteriorate. At that time I had stopped working. I sent my daughter to go and wait for him at the bus station with an umbrella. I got worried because they took time to get home. When they got home, he was so drunk and had not been drinking for two weeks. He had promised me that he would never ever drink again. When he got into the house, the first thing he said to me was that he could not stop drinking although he tried for weeks and stayed clean. He had even lost his spectacles. I was hurting and did not want to say much because I was trying to nurse his feelings. He ate supper and went to sleep. I then discovered that that day he had been trying to call one of his daughters, something that he had never done before. Our daughter called to find out what his daughter wanted when he called her. On the phone, his daughter could pick up that her father was drunk and he did not want to be long on the phone because he knew that she would be aware of his drinking, and be angry. Just before we went to bed he said to me that sometimes you marry a person thinking that things would change and they do not. Sometimes you stop loving that person. I could not understand because he seemed to be talking to himself. Regretting why he married me. In the morning he could not wake up and later woke up and wanted to go to work. He did not look well and he forced to go to working. He later called to say that he was safe. When he came back from work he still did not look well. He could not even eat well and he went to sleep. Later that week he got paid and gave me money. That morning I woke up with him and asked me not to look at him. He made himself breakfast, which was unusual. He then asked me to tell his brother to come and see him that day. They both drink very much. I then left them and went to a wedding. At the wedding I was very uncomfortable and decided to go home. I found them sitting and enjoying themselves, talking about their late nephew. I then expressed a concern about their relatives with whom they have distant relationships, and do not even know where they stay. His brother then left and we went back to the wedding. As a shy person, he did not want to go to the wedding by himself also because he was drunk. We did not stay long and when we got home he sat on the bed and I made him supper. In the middle of the night he woke up and told me that he was not well. He said he suspected that his food was poisoned. His body was swelling, and he vomited, and felt better and fell asleep. In the morning he woke up before me but did not want to go to the doctor. He forced me to go to the wedding again and promised me that if there could be a problem, he would ask our daughter to go and get me. I became suspicious when he said that and decided to stay with him. He asked me for his tablets and he sat on the bed and sat up. He told me that he wanted to relax and sleep for a while. I went to the kitchen and heard him



struggling to breathe and I tried to help him be comfortable and he took his last breath while I was holding him. I cried so much, asking him why he could do that to me. I called my daughter to come and help me and call neighbours. I was still crying at the time. The children came running and I asked them to call an ambulance. There was such confusion, everybody not knowing what to do.

Interviewer: What was going through your mind at that time and how did you feel?

Interviewee: At that time I was blaming myself thinking that there could probably be something that I did to him that hurt him. I asked myself questions that I could not answer. Thinking that our children would blame me that I killed their father. Why he did not tell me that he was going to die. Why did God not wake him up, or maybe He wanted me to see him when he died. That was traumatising. His eyes were closed and I closed his mouth and wipe him. I was only grateful that I decided to stay home with him and not go to the wedding because people would be blaming me for leaving him alone at home when he was sick. They would even think that I killed him. His youngest favourite daughter came after the paramedics had left. She came in, saw her father lying there and screamed wanting his father and I did not know what to do. I felt that she was asking for her father from me. Neighbours came and helped to calm her down. My sister came first from the family side, and went to report at the church. At the same time, we called the undertaker to come and get him. I called his brother to make sure that his brother sees him before the undertaker came. Our neighbours were there already for support, still asking my husband why he did that. We put him on the bed covered. His brother came three hours later, crying. He thought maybe his brother bit me up.

Interviewer: Did they (brother in-law and his wife) give you the support that you needed?

Interviewee: They did not. My husband would always tell me that I must know that his family would not give me the support that I would need because his family was not united like mine and I must not expect them to support me. I must only expect support from my family.

Interviewer: Did you go through any death rituals?

Interviewee: Not really because my brother in-law's wife is a member of these charismatic churches and as a result, as a couple, they do not practice cultural rituals that they were brought up with. However, my husband always used to express a wish that when he passes away he would like me to put on black clothes. I would always ask him how because when I cleanse, his brother has to foot the bill for all of that because it is an expensive ritual. His brother never has

money; he buys liquor with his money and in Zulu culture, which is his brother's role. He eventually saw my point. He stopped talking about that but instead; he would often ask me if I would remarry if he could die before me. I would reassure him and he would tell me that if I could, he would haunt that man. He would promise me that he would never remarry.

Interviewer: How did you deal with the death ritual issue?

Interviewee: His corpse was brought home over night. It was painful. During the funeral arrangement week, my brother in-law called me outside to talk about the expected death rituals. He told me that he and my husband talked about it and they decided that their wives would not go through the rituals because they are the only two left in their family. They felt that as they did not know much about it without elders left, they could rather not commit to anything instead of making costly mistakes. He asked me to respect like, for example, be home before sunset, avoid cemetery, etc. He also gave me the choice of whether to respect that for three or six months. I told him that I felt that three months is short, and in six months time would be summer and I could not cleanse in summer because it has to be in winter. I did not mind to respect for a year, after all, he was my husband. The only problem I had was with my grandmother who felt that I should put on black clothes but my brother in-law explained to her and she grudgingly accepted.

Interviewer: How did the funeral go?

Interviewee: It went well with the support from the church, and my children. The problem came after the burial. My husband's favourite daughter could not just accept that her father was no more. On the other hand, I had to be strong for my other children, presenting a strong face. I could not fall asleep at night. I was only able to sleep well the first three months because I was mentally tired. I would think the whole day. I think the problem was that on the fourth month, that month's dates were the same as the month he passed away. That killed me. Even now, the 23rd of every month tortures me, counting months of his death. When the 23rd approaches, I get sick, realising that he will never come back ever again. During the fourth month, I got so sick that I decided to go to church for help, asking the congregation to pray for me. The source was that I started feeling scared that my husband would come and get me on the 23rd. I did not want to die because of my children. I also had to unveil my husband's parents' tombstones. I just could not die. I even thought that I was not praying enough. I even dreamt that I was dying, struggling to breath. I would really feel depressed. Every time I have a bad dream I would pray, but that time I did not. That really bothered me. The church really helped me because they prayed for me. There is also a friend of mine whose husband died the same way as me. She told me that what I was going through is normal, the sleeplessness, headaches and all. She reassured me that with time,



I would be myself again. I could not eat except soft porridge. There was another neighbour of mine who lost her husband and told me the same as my friend. She discouraged me to take sleeping tablets. So I really had the support.

PARTICIPANT SEVEN

Interviewer: What happened on New Year eve?

Interviewee: We were used to having a braai at home with friends and family. It was an annual thing. He was so happy that day because he valued family and friends. He took so much alcohol that night.

Interviewer: What happened the following day?

Interviewee: He was in pain and vomiting. His legs were swollen and could not urinate properly because he was in pain. I knew that his condition did not allow him to take alcohol but he insisted and I gave up on persuading him to live a healthy lifestyle. He was the kind of person who would not be persuaded when he had decided to do something. I was avoiding unnecessary tensions, although I was not pleased with his way of life. I reasoned it out by telling myself that if it were something that he enjoyed, if I discouraged it, what would I replace it with. I believe that one should leave life to the maximum, but should also be responsible. That is a good value in life.

Interviewer: What about his treatment?

Interviewee: Because he was employed, he had medical aid although he took a lower option, which could not cover his medical needs. He could only consult a general practitioner. He would sometimes complicate because his diet was not the one he was advised to take, and would be taken to hospital. I was used to taking him to hospital and he would be admitted. I would be very lonely and sometimes angry and sad because if he could have complied with his regimen, he would be alive today. He would braai meat with friends, the food that he was not supposed to eat. He knew that every time he ate braai meat he would be so sick that he would be admitted. Despite all of that, he was still able to go to work even though he then wanted to retire because of ill health.

Interviewer: When did he pass away?



Interviewee: In 2005 January 14th.

Interviewer: What happened to him?

Interviewee: That morning he was fine. He did not show any struggle but had high blood pressure and diabetes. I remember that morning we were talking and I expressed a need to further my studies to do Matric. He even laughed at me saying that I would not be admitted because I was too old to study. We were laughing about it. I was even saying to him that nobody is old to study. We were in the bedroom. He then decided to go and check the door that we usually forget to close because he was going to work and I was also going to register for my Matric. He suddenly said something that was out of context to what we were talking about. He said he just felt like dying because of the debts he had. I answered him jokingly saying that those debts are for liquor that nobody asked for but him. I suggested that he must go and pay his debtors and never ever take liquor on credit. He just said he would try to be home early that afternoon.

Interviewer: What happened that day?

Interviewee: On my way back from registering an ambulance went passed and I remember wondering who could be in it. I was even saying to myself that those ambulances just try to exercise power when it is not even an emergency. When I got home a neighbour called me and asked me where I came from. She told me that there was a lady who came looking for me saying that my husband fell on his way to work. I even thought he might have been drunk, fell and broke a bone. A neighbour took me in his car to a place where they said he went for a hair cut before going to work. They expected me to know where he does his haircut, when I knew him to have gone straight to work. We drove to a nearby hostel and asked about a man who was taken to hospital. I was even scared to say his name. They actually said his name and told me that an ambulance took him to hospital with a friend.

Interviewer: What happened next?

Interviewee: I went home and called my children to tell them about their father. We had planned to meet at the hospital. My eldest daughter came and we left together. I called his brother who is a medical doctor and he left straight to the hospital. When we got to the hospital, we found him at casualty lying on a stretcher. I asked him what the problem was and he told me that he suspected a stroke. He then reassured me that he would be fine. We then waited for a doctor who sent us to the X-ray department. He once told me that the day he dies, he does not want to bother anyone.

He said he would just go into a deep sleep. On our way to the X-ray department I thought of what he once said but I did not say it to anyone, not even to him. His brain was scanned and when he was pushed out, the doctors took him to a room next to where we were waiting but I did not go in. I was scared. Only my daughter and her uncle's wife went in. Apparently they were told that the prognosis was bad, and there was no hope of recovery. He was then taken to the ward and I walked with them. They just told me that the doctor told them that my husband would be fine. I got hope. He was then bathed and we were then told to come and see him. He was so handsome when I looked at him, and I was hopeful. I was even telling my daughter that the following day we would come visit him and then go to their aunt's house because they had a party. We then left.

Interviewer: Were you alone at home?

Interviewee: Yes I was. In fact I was used to that because we had two daughters. One was staying with my parents who were too old to look after them, and the other one was at a boarding school. When I got home I was so tired. I sat down and watched TV. About two hours later the phone rang and it was my daughter telling me that she was coming over to be with me. I just thought maybe she decided to come over because she knew that I was alone at home. She also suggested that we should change plans and not go to the party the following day. Immediately after her call another call came in and I thought my daughter forgot to tell me something when we were on the phone. It was a white person talking asking me who he was talking to. I told him my name and he me that he was sorry that.... I did not hear the rest of the sentence because I did not know what happened thereafter. When I gained consciousness I called my daughter and she told me that the doctor also called her informing her of her father's death.

Interviewer: How did you feel then?

Interviewee: I did not feel anything. I was numb and just did not want to believe that I was on my own. I sat down on the chair and could not think. I was overwhelmed. I could not cry. I was confused and to me it was like a bad dream. I was okay.

Interviewer: Were you still alone then?

Interviewee: My daughter came and started informing the neighbours about the death, and also called the church and his employer. I could not think of all that, and I felt useless and disempowered.

Interviewer: How did the funeral arrangements go?

Interviewee: I never knew because my daughter and my family did everything, decisions and all. They even chose the coffin.

Interviewer: How did the funeral go?

Interviewee: I was aware that there were people who came to the funeral but I could not tell who was there and who was not. I was like a zombie.

Interviewer: How did you deal with life after your husband's death?

Interviewee: You know, before his death, I was busy redoing our bathroom. He used to be proud of me. That used to encourage me. Now that he is no more, I do not have the motivation. It is still incomplete and my daughter decided to take over. I miss him, lonely and would often cry. I experience sleeplessness, lack appetite, socially withdrawn, and prefer to be on my own. Sometimes I would not wake up and just be in bed the whole day. With time I went back to work because when he was still alive, he would be sick more often and that affected my relationship with my boss. Me and I boss decided that I should stop working to look after my husband. After hearing about my husband's death, my boss called me suggesting that I should come back to work. That helped me a lot because when I interact with people and stop thinking all the time although, at times, I do feel like being on my own.

Interviewer: Did you go through any death rituals?

Interviewee: Not really. I was only given herbs to boil and drink. That was horrible and I pretended to be drinking that water when I was not. I do not believe in that. I did not put on black clothes, and I was not cleansed. My husband's corpse did however sleep over at home. If only I knew how I would feel, I would not have allowed that. It was hurting to see him in that coffin and sitting next to the coffin the whole night. That was not the experience I had of my husband. These rituals are really working against helping widows to go through the loss with ease.

Interviewer: How do you feel now?

Interviewee: I have no interest in anything. Although I am working now but still I do not feel fulfilled without my husband. It would have been worse. I needed a job to be with my old colleagues.

Interviewer: Did you get adequate support?



Interviewee: I got the support although after the funeral it was only my two children who still thought of me and would call to check on me. I missed talking to someone because I was used to having my husband with me. They had a system of calling one after the other daily. My in-laws forgot about me after the funeral. They only gave me the necessary support during the funeral week. I did tell them.

Interviewer: What role did your in-laws play in all of that?

Interviewee: My in-laws did put me on blue clothes as opposed to black. I put them on the morning of the funeral.

A year before my husband his brother passed away, and then mine. Mine was on the fourteen of January and my brother in-law the fifteen of January a year before. My mother in-law then felt that six months would be enough for me with those blue clothes. Her children felt that there was no need to put them on.

Interviewer: Did you want to put on those blue clothes?

Interviewee: I just accepted whatever they were suggesting. I used to fight very much with my mother in-law during the period between the death of my husband and the funeral. We were both sitting on that mattress but when her children came, she would stop fighting me. The main source of our fight was the fact that whenever I felt down I would open my Bible and she would scream at me for that. She would stop me from reading my Bible, and we would then fight terribly. Whatever I tried to do to avoid crying in front of my children she would fight me. A friend of mine even intervened because even when I sat on a chair because there was a time when I would just feel tired of sitting on the mattress she would again fight me. She then tried to explain to my friend that her son's death had impacted her.

Interviewer: Why didn't you take her off the mattress?

Interviewee: It was for peace sake. I was helpless. But my relatives were supportive because at one point that mother in-law of mine wanted to move furniture around and just manhandling my curtains. It was terrible. She wanted to destroy my curtains when she did not even have that kind of curtains. My husband's aunts were also so horrible except my husband's siblings.

Interviewer: Who was buying groceries like tea for people who came for condolences?



Interviewee: My children did that when she with her big mouth was just sitting and criticising. When her in-laws came, meaning my husband's uncles and aunts from his father's side, she would cry so much. My friend even asked her about that, giving the impression that I was treating her bad. She told her to stop that.

Interviewer: Did your husband's corpse come home overnight?

Interviewee: Yes. It was terrible. I was numb and just thinking about him the whole night, imagining how I was going to be and live my life without him. I however did not regret his presence that night because to me, he was able to spend his last night at his house. That makes me feel good. The family only viewed him, meaning his family of origin and extended family, and mine.

Interviewer: Who prepared the corpse?

Interviewee: His two uncles from his father's side prepared him. For peace sake I agreed to every thing. The morning of his arrival I was not anxious but looking forward to see him for the last time. When he came in the coffin was too big for the coffin to come in. When they struggled with the coffin it felt like they were hurting him. I don't want to think about that night. I could not sleep the whole night. I wanted to open the coffin the whole night and look at him to make closure but I was not allowed to do that. My bedroom was full of her silly relatives.

Interviewer: What happened when you came back from the cemetery?

Interviewee: That I could handle at the time, probably because I had cried enough. The people that I attend church with were surrounding me and I even forgot about my mother in-law because they were focusing on me and not her.

Interviewer: Who stayed with you after the funeral when everybody left?

Interviewee: My mother in-law stayed and left on Monday. My sister and friend also stayed behind. My sister asked her daughter to stay with me for about three months, which really helped.

Interviewer: Did you go through the cleansing ritual?

Interviewee: Yes I did. According to the Zulu tradition, my in-laws cleanse me first, and then my family of origin. They did that six months later when I took off the blue clothes.



Interviewer: What was expected of you in the six months that you had the blue clothes on?

Interviewee: Nobody gave me instructions but I followed my own. I told my mother in-law that I had enrolled for Matric at a night school and I would attend with those blue clothes. She did not have a problem with that except that when I leave the house I must make sure that I switch on the lights. I told her that I had already paid for my studies and life must go on because I was preparing for a better life for myself. My only problem was going to be my teachers because I did not know whether they would have a problem with my blue clothes or not. Fortunately they did not have a problem with that. They were very supportive.

Interviewer: What happened when they (in-laws) cleansed you?

Interviewee: My mother in-law cleansed me, explaining that because the blue clothes were theirs and their son, they (blue clothes) had to be burnt by them. I could not take them (blue clothes) to my family of origin. I was cleansed twice.

Interviewer: Did you take anything oral?

Interviewee: Oh my God. Those herbs were boiled and I had to drink that boiled water. The taste was horrible. My sister insisted and I was even asking her where she took that tradition from because we did not practice that at my parents' house. They explain it by saying that because I was making love to him and his blood was in me it had to be cleansed. I never understood how his blood could be in me. I never understood that logic because to me it just never made sense. I drank it because my sister would be next to me to make sure that I take it. My mother in-law did not even know that because her other daughter in-law was not given those herbs. For my sister's sake I complied. I had to drink that for the whole six months, morning and evening. After that, I wanted nothing to do with that.

Interviewer: How was the taste?

Interviewee: It was black in colour and tasted like boiled aloe water. I used to drink it with soft drink. I would feel bilious by just thinking about it. Without soft drink I would not drink it.

Interviewer: How did it help you?

Interviewee: I somehow appreciated that horrible drink because I had blemishes and they were gone six months later. At least that was the good thing that came out of it. You know when you lose a husband you become everybody's fool (laughing).



Interviewer: What was your experience of people with your blue clothes?

Interviewee: The worst was at the taxi rank and in the taxi. People would be staring at you, some moving away from you, some telling me to stand next to the person in front of the queue, and that person would not want you next to him or her. I felt like an outcast. The queue marshal would scream at me. In the taxi, I was expected to sit at the back seat. There was this short queue marshal who would take everybody at the back seat telling everybody that I must go in first. They would all be looking at me not knowing whether they feel pity for what or me. At that time I would be facing down and would cry when I get home, blaming my husband for that. When I walk and decide to turn my head I would find people looking at me. That was terrible. Where I used to work was better because that area is full of foreigners from Africa. They did not have that attitude and I was free and happy.

Interviewer: Have you unveiled your husband's tombstone?

Interviewee: Not yet. Apparently before the unveiling of his tombstone I have to fetch him from his grave and bring his shadow home. It is a ritual before the unveiling ritual. Also, because he died in hospital, his family of origin went to fetch his spirit from the hospital. How they did that I never knew. I have to fetch his spirit from his grave to his house. They would tell you that his spirit is roaming the streets of Soweto and I must bring him back to his house.

Interviewer: How do you do that?

Interviewee: I should slaughter a bull whether I like it or not. His brother even complained about that saying that it was a waste of money. He told his mother that when he dies, his wife should not be expected to do that. He was very angry, suggesting that I must just buy meat from the butchery, but his mother insisted that I must do it as she suggested, blood must flow. The way it was done, I had to buy that bull but they (in-laws) alone and my children go to the grave and fetch him from his grave without me, to see how their father's family do rituals. How ridiculous. My brother in-law refused to go. He was arguing that that ritual is not going to help me heal but take me back to my husband's death. My sister in-law suggested that for peace sake, we must just comply because with their father and brother, that ritual was done. She even suggested that her brother must write down everything that he wants to be done and not done and take it to his lawyer. That brother in-law even told them he does not want his wife to put on black clothes.

Interviewer: Did your husband have any opinion about all of that?



Interviewee: Oh, he liked them. He liked everything that his family of origin practised. Slaughtering goat and all.

Interviewer: What tribe are you?

Interviewee: I don't know because my father even passed away not knowing my origin, even my mother's origin I do not know. I grew up speaking Afrikaans at home. I ended up getting married to a Zulu. That is one complicated tribe with rituals that never make sense with a waste of money. They are so adamant. They also cut me with a razor, something that I never did when I grew up. What that symbolises I do not know.

Interviewer: How do you feel so far?

Interviewee: So far I still do not understand myself because some days I would be fine when other days I would be depressed. I only sleep well at my daughter's place but not at home. I never eat well, with continuous headaches.

PARTICIPANT EIGHT

Interviewer: What experiences did you go through after the death of your husband?

Interviewee: I started having a lot of chest pains, couldn't breath with a severe back pain. I was admitted and attended to by a Neurologist who took me to theatre to manipulate my back. I was discharged after five days. When I got home, the symptoms started again, short breath, and feeling like my house is too small and suffocating. I would cry and people would ask me if it was the death of my husband or not. I would tell them that it was the back pain and would feel that the chest pains may manifest into a heart attack. My children would take me back to the hospital in the middle of the night. That was the second time, and then admitted in ICU, the very unit that I run and have been running for more than ten years at the very same hospital. I was convinced that it was a heart attack. When they check me, they were actually asking me and I ended up supervising them. Nothing was found out of those tests. When I woke up in the morning, I felt so good. Feeling embarrassed that people might think that I was playing sick and seeking attention. I did not want my doctor and colleagues to find me in the unit that morning. Five o'clock that morning I discharged myself and asked my children to come and get me. When I got home, the symptoms came up again. At that time, the back pain had gone but was experiencing more chest pains than the back. When I went to my doctor for the third time, he was hard on me. He said that he had learnt that I recently lost my husband. I think my colleagues told him, and most of his patients were depressed, and probably got the background information from colleagues. He was



hard on me, telling me that I must go home and deal with the loss of my husband or I must go and consult with a Psychologist. The way he said it made me strong although I cried and he was there for me at the time. It then dawned to me that the problem was not the back pain, and I wasted so much time away from work. I was so embarrassed to even face my colleagues because I never wanted to be pitied.

Interviewer: When did that stop?

Interviewee: When I got home I realised that I was depressing my children, and I had a job to secure although when I go to work my colleagues would be looking at me with pitiful eyes and I hated that. Before I started at work I phoned the matron and my unit requesting them that when I come over, they must pretend like everything was normal and treat me just that way. Mind you, I stayed home for six weeks. I really wanted to go back to work because at home I used to struggle because I would be smelling my husband's body smell and all the things that would be reminding me that he is no more. I behaved like I was psychotic. I remember one night I was asleep and I heard the bedroom door open and felt him slipping into the bed. That side of my body felt so cold. I felt him and was scared. It was like he came as a supernatural being and mind you, the corpse is cold. I even talked to myself saying to him that if he wanted to visit me he must help me not to be scared. Since then I would sleep with the lights on. I think also it was because when he came home late, he would not switch on the lights so that he should not disturb me. That was why I decided to go back to work. I also read a lot of books about bereavement. It seems like I wanted to jump stages of the bereavement process and wanted to get over the process. I felt that I cried enough, nursed him for a long time and buried him the way he would have wanted to. I even asked everybody who decided to stay with me for some time to go because I felt that they were going to delay the process that I was supposed to go through. I just wanted to be with my children.

Interviewer: How was your experience of going back to work?

Interviewee: I then called my colleagues and my unit informing them that I was coming back and asked them never to mention my husband and just treat me like before. When I went back, it was actually me who was trying to be brighter than them, in a way trying to show them that I was fine. I tried very much to avoid talking about him. At the same time, I could read a lot from their faces, like an indirect pity, and surprised at how I was behaving. When I walk out of the ward, I would meet those who did not know my request and would start with condolences. I ended up staying in my ward from morning until I knock off. I still did feel fine.

Interviewer: How different did you experience your house now that you were back to work?

Interviewee: The minute I get home I would smell my husband and would want to cry. I would think of people around me and would think of my children. I came to realise that my children were taking cues from me. When they see me in control they tended to be strong, and would not cry in front of me. What hurt me most was the realisation of my children having taken the burden of the loss of their father and carrying me at the same time when I should have been the one carrying them. I was not aware of that. It was only when my daughter broke down at work and her friend called me, telling me that she says that she could not afford to cry her father's loss out when she should have because she was the elder one and had to run around and be strong for me and her younger sister. It was only then that it was hitting her. She said that she could not even cry in front of me. That really affected me. At the time, I did not want to be with people. People would come over and I would not open for them. I would sleep, or read books, or end up opening the wardrobes looking for nothing and would find his photos. I would put them on the dresser and take them away. I thought with time it would be better but it did not although the intensity is getting less and less. I can now do things that I could not do then. For example, then, when a man talks to me, I would feel like my husband was there with me and was disrespecting my husband. It was like that man was saying that he had been waiting for my husband to die so that he could make his move. Sometimes I would think that maybe if I could have had black clothes on, it could have helped me in pushing those men away. The fact that I did not put black clothes on, helped me to be still faithful to my husband even after his death. By the way, he was my first boyfriend; I do not know any other man in my life except him.

Interviewer: Why did you not put on black clothes?

Interviewee: My husband did not like it. My in-laws were insisting but it was not my problem but theirs. We were going to the mortuary with his sister who commented that I must not forget to buy a black material to sew as my black clothes. I then got an opportunity to tell her about her brother's wishes. I told her that my husband did not want me to put on black clothes, did not want his furniture in his house to be moved around when he had passed on, did not want the windows of his house to be ashed and made dirty. He said when he had passed on he had passed on and that was it. I told my sister in-law to tell the rest of the family my husband's wishes. He also told me not to interfere with his bed and put the mattress on the floor. I never even used to cover my head as a sign of respect. He insisted that I should be as normal as possible. That was how we lived our lives as a family. In both our families of origin, rituals were practised but we decided not to. He even asked his family of origin why they were practising this and that but they could not explain to him convincingly and we decided to have our own norms and values, which I am still carrying. My children are females and when they get married they will follow the practises of their

in-laws if they feel like. When I'm at my in-laws' I join them in what they practise but not in my house. We had a friend who lost her husband and was put on black clothes. At night she would take them off and put on her fancy clothes, and would go and enjoy her nightlife. I really do not see the significance of those black clothes. That was when we realised that black clothes meant nothing.

Interviewer: Did you get any support from them?

Interviewee: None, zero support but hurts. My husband had three sisters left. The one who talks too much did not even visit her brother at the hospital. She would just call me to check how he was. Not even on weekends. When he passed away, my children first told people who were there for him. She was only told in the morning, and wanted to make it an issue. When she got to our house, the first thing she said was that she would not be able to help me with anything. I did not ask her for help but that was what she said. All I said was that it was okay, and what was important was her presence. When the youngest sister came and gave me a one thousand rands contribution. She asked me how much her sister contributed and I told her the truth. She was very angry and apparently they had a big fight where the youngest told her how ungrateful she was when my husband was her only blood brother who did so much for her. The following day she gave me nine hundred rands. Even her other sister who was unemployed contributed something. I did not need their financial help because I could burry my husband without a problem. What they did was a good gesture.

Interviewer: Did the corpse come home overnight?

Interviewee: Yes. That was one trauma. When I die I do not want to traumatise my children by coming home overnight although they may perceive it differently. That was one aspect that I did not discuss with my husband. Maybe if we could have discussed it he would not have come home because it is traumatic. It was so traumatic for me to sleep in our bed when he was lying there in that box. I kept asking myself why they were closing the coffin because he was dead. I wanted to see him but again I did not. Not that I did not want him but did not want him to come and lie there cold and dry because it was frustrating as he was there and I could not touch him. It was very traumatic. My children know that I do not want to come home overnight but in the morning.

Interviewer: Whose idea was it?

Interviewee: That was not discussed but the undertaker did ask me and I just told them to bring him at the time that they usually bring the bodies home. Then I thought I would feel better but



when I heard the hearse siren I just went mad. I was told that I was saying that I did not want, I do not want. I do not remember. I'm told that I talked until I fell asleep because I took antidepressants and sleeping tablets. I did not know how I was going to feel that was why I took the tablets so that I should never have time to wake up until in the morning. I'm told that I slept giving him my back. I even had pyjamas on. I did not want anything because I did not want to sleep with his corpse. I loved my husband and loved him even when he was dead. Even after his burial I regretted burying him and wished he could have been embalmed and be put in a glass frame so that I could look at him as and when I feel like. He was then buried. When he left the house it was terrible. After he was viewed the coffin was closed and locked. It felt like they were suffocating him. They gave me the key and I refused that they should lock the coffin. He looked fine and alive and did not want the locking part. They did not and promised that they would only lock it at the graveside. When we got to the cemetery I got out of the car. They were playing a hymn "Nearer my God to thee" and it really affected me because I thought I was starting to accept. That was so because I was with her terrible sister and she commented that I did a good job in burying her brother. I thought she was repenting and would give her a chance. She even commented about how I nursed him, thanking me. I took tablets again that morning so that I could be strong because I cried enough when he was sick. I wanted to celebrate his life with the best way that I could because he was flamboyant and would have liked to bury him the way I did. Now that hymn that was playing affected me. I did not want to cry. I now overheard the eldest sister saying that in their church they do not practise the right of throwing soil into the grave. I told that man that my children and I would. I told him that for my husband I would do what pleased me. I did that against their will. I think what we did they did not like. They did not say anything. They had already told the larger family that I would not put on black clothes. One of them came to me and advised me to put it on because after six months I would be psychotic or die. I told her that the way I miss my husband I would not mind to die. They also told me that I must be washed with herbs and also drink boiled herbs water. I told them that I did not undermine their practices because even my family of origin practised them. I explained to them that I was allergic to a lot of things and they must analyse everything scientifically because when I complicate and taken to hospital I want to tell the doctors exactly what I took although I knew that I would never take that stuff. I did not even want to see them. They then gave up and were unhappy about the fact that I rejected everything they were suggesting. They forgot that that was my home and we do things in our own preferred way.

Interviewer: What happened the following day?

Interviewee: The very people who were telling me that they would not be able to help me financially were the ones who had already taken my husband's clothes for themselves and hiding



them in bundles before the ritual. They had taken my husband's best clothes and I was not aware but told. Somebody saw them and put them with the rest. That sister in-law was angry with me for that because she wanted them for her sons. I only chose whatever I wanted as a memory. I could have refused even though we did not have a son but I was avoiding them coming whenever and go through that ritual. I wanted everybody to leave after that and be with my children. It is costly. That was a sore sport for her. Do you know that since my husband passed away they had never been to my house? I then asked that very sister in-law of mine for her son to come and stay with us for some time because I did not feel safe without a male in the house. Six months later she sent another son and I thought she just came for a visit. As time went on I called their mother (sister in-law) complaining about the cost of maintaining two adult males who were unemployed. She told me that they were not supposed to live apart as they are twins. I then told her that if that was the case they must both leave. With time I called again and she told me that they did not want to go. What helped me was that the other one would bring girls in the house and sleep with them. That was how he left. My in-laws, since the death of my husband, had never been to my house. Before then, they were commenting that they need answers regarding my husband's death. They were then suggesting that we must go to a witch doctor to know what really happened. I refused and they apparently went and have not come back to me and I am not interested.

Interviewer: Do they suspect that you killed him?

Interviewee: Maybe because they have never been to my house since, until we unveiled the tombstone. Even then my terrible sister in-law came a day before the ceremony. That was why we did not inform or involve her in the arrangements of the event. We also had an attitude towards her because she kept on saying things about me to people. She was saying that I wanted her children to leave my house because I wanted to bring a man in my house. My daughter called her and told her that I have the right to do that because it was her house. My children then wanted to know if I would remarry and I told them that my grave is next to my husband's and would not be buried next to their father with a different surname. Even when I can have a boyfriend he would not get into my husband's house. I would be disrespecting my husband. I am not hard up for men, and the man who can suit me is not yet born. I've had my fair share of marriage. You know, I walk the talk. I was not going to prove a point to anyone. My husband was my first boyfriend and I was happy with him. He was not perfect because he was a womaniser. My family of origin really supported me. Also some of my husband's relatives supported me. Those were the ones that my terrible sister in-law does not like.

Interviewer: Didn't you get support from friends?



Interviewee: Some of them I locked them out and told them to give me my space. I did not want to interact with them because their husbands were sympathising with me and wanted to help. I read something from their wives, or maybe I was just paranoid that they did not approve of their husbands' need to help. I thought they would not trust me, although they would call. I used to suspect that they were not comfortable with me. I then kept to myself because I know that when I go out I make sure that I look good and I feel good. My associates now are new people, more my old friends before I got married. I am not bitter about the ones I had when my husband was still alive. They do not know how difficult this process is (bereavement).

Interviewer: When was your husband diagnosed?

Interviewee: He was diagnosed with cancer where the primary lesion was the lung. I had guilt feelings because I blamed myself for not detecting it in time, meaning in January. It was in July 2005, and he was coughing again. He was told that his lung had pneumonia but it was funny because that kind of pneumonia is only found in birds. He then started having short breath. I asked him to go and consult with a Physician and it was found that his lungs were affected by a long period of smoking. He was then given puffs to use for that. He had stopped smoking by then but the lung was already damaged and would not recover. With time he developed numbness of the leg and I suspected the compression of the disc because of age. He then went for X-rays and nothing was found and was referred to a Physiotherapist but it got worse. Around July we went to my colleague's funeral and he commented that the next person to be buried would be him. He started limping but what worried me was that after bathing he would not feel that he did not dry himself. He did not feel sensations and I forced him to go for MRI scan. The numbness was progressing up to the chest. I would make appointments for him with doctors and would not honour them. On this particular day he did not feel himself urinating and wet himself. That was then that he went to consult. We went together and was scanned. That took a long time. The doctor told us the bad news of the tumour in the spine. He was overwhelmed and asked me if I understand. I asked him the type of the tumour and it was a serious one and, if operated, he might die on the operating table. What scared me was the location of the tumour. I've seen patients with that kind of cancer being paralysed. The doctor did not promise recovery with the operation. He asked me to decide and I refused because I wanted him to make a decision for himself. That was the one time that he had to decide for himself. He agreed. We were not talking at the time and we were offered coffee and both of us did not feel like coffee. We left and in the car I was trying to reassure him, telling him that doctors know what was best for him. On our way home, we stopped at a petrol station, and I started crying. He was not sure of what was wrong with me and I explained it by telling him that because my sister was also sick and I could not take



it any longer. Since then, he would look at me with those appealing eyes of help like I know what was best for him and I could help.

Interviewer: Was there anything of importance in your life together that he would talk about?

Interviewee: Not really. It would be about issues of the family, meaning the children. He would ask me about the children and how they were doing. That time he was admitted. At the hospital the doctor called me to explain what they had done so far and their intentions from then on. They found out that the cough he had in January was the source of his cancer and if they had known then, they would have cut that part of the lung that was causing the problem. By then it had metastasised and spread to the spine. He also had prostate cancer. He later became unconscious. He was also oozing fluid from the operation that did on him although it served as an outlet.

Interviewer: Emotionally at the time, where was he?

Interviewee: He never shared anything with me. He never shared his fears but with other people. Maybe it was because he knew me and how easily tearful I am. He would rather ask the children how I was at home and they would tell him how tearful I was. Maybe if they did not, he would have shared with me. Apparently his doctor told him that he would never make it but he never told me. Even when he was given a weekend pass out and was told that it would be his last time at home he did not say. All that he said was that he would be given weekends home until he got better and discharged. Instead when we got home, he refused the child to go to a party nearby. She insisted that she should stay with him but did go. She died at the end of August, 2005. I only understood after his death that he wanted all of us to be there. The following day he asked his elder daughter to prepare lunch for him but I told my daughter that I would prepare them because I knew the diet that he was on. Time and again he would ask me if our daughter was not home yet to bring him lunch. He eventually gave up and ate mine. Our daughter came later and he looked disappointed. His friends who knew that he was home came to see him. They stayed until late and he was exhausted and I asked him to sleep. He was tired but wanted to watch TV with me and I insisted that he must sleep. Normally he would have insisted but he did not and did what I was suggesting. He commented about how tired I should be and we must sleep, saying that he would sleep after I had fallen asleep. I immediately fell asleep because I was tired and had to wake up at night to test his insulin. He would wake up at night and want to go to the toilet and it would be then that I would test his insulin. It was cold and he would tug me in when I thought he was asleep. The following day he woke up and I bathed him. He was sobbing and I initially thought he was having convulsions. He told me that because he knew that I had a backache he



felt that he was burdening me. I reassured him that I wanted to look after him because I had even arranged some weeks off work to look after him when he got discharged and had already organised a wheel chair. I told him to worry about him. When we left for the hospital in the car, he looked back at the house when the car was moving until it turned the corner. Whatever the doctor told him could have been the source of his behaviour that weekend. It should have been difficult for him because I think he regretted not opening up to me about his last visit, which I suspect the doctor told him about. I suspect the doctor told him to discuss his death with the family, something that he did not do. The way he cried in the bathroom was the first time I saw him cry like that since I knew him. Emotionally I am not a strong person. Every time I was at the hospital I would often walk out of the ward to go and cry. I think he could tell that I was crying because he even told one of his friends that I was crying. Just as much as I wanted him to tell me about his feelings, I also could not ask him. He would not even tell me what his doctor was saying, and could not go and ask the doctor myself. One of my friends did go and ask his psychologist and was told that he would not leave the hospital until he died. The psychologist told me that my husband said he understood that the odds were against him and if he had a choice he would choose to live because there were a lot of things he had to do but he dies then he meant he did not have a choice, and would accept it. I then asked her about his spiritual state and she told me that he was ready because he left everything in the hands of the Lord. He had accepted that if the Lord takes him it was fine and if not it would be a bonus. That really hurt me. The funny thing about death is that I wanted him to rise from the dead and be just the way he was sick and not healthy.

Interviewer: What happened when he died?

Interviewee: Before then he wanted to see his aunt. She came and when he saw her he stood up and was so excited and hugged her. He wanted to say something to his aunt but could not. That was really frustrating. He asked me to bring him ice cream and he ate it like someone who had not had food for weeks. He said he wanted my ice cream. The following day he could not speak, and would just look at me with tears rolling down his cheeks. I suggested he be taken to theatre for whatever could help. You know I behaved like I was not a nurse. I am sure they were also asking themselves if I was really a nurse. What I was seeing was as a result of the progression of the illness. I even asked them to switch of the morphine, knowing very well the pain that he was feeling. I would wake him up and tell him how much I love him, and tell him that I had forgiven him everything he did to me and he must also forgive me my mistakes. I was recommitting myself to him. It was the first time I very apologised to him, probably because he made more mistakes than I did. He would often apologise but not me. He was suffering but I did not want him to go. I asked him to try and fight. When we got home we got a call to say that he passed away. We went back



to the hospital. By then I had already taken my antidepressant and sleeping tablets. I am told that when I got there I was telling his corpse how much I love him, and I cried holding his hand. I am also told that I did not want to leave the ward when the undertakers came to get him, wrapping him myself and walk him to the hearse. Apparently I had his clean pyjamas, and asked the undertaker to make sure that he put him on those pyjamas and a perfume because I did not want him to have a bad smell and get cold. Apparently when I got home I just fell asleep. When I woke up in the morning, I could not remember and I asked my daughter if it true that her father had passed away. It was then that reality hit. They then told me what I did the previous day.

Interviewer: What happened next?

Interviewee: When we went to choose the coffin, I asked to see him. I found him with his pyjamas on and he smelled the perfume I gave the undertaker. I had drugged myself and I tried to warm him with my hands because he was cold, and they told me that I was not allowed to stay long in there. I then joined my children to go and talk business. At the time I so wished he could have talked to me and I could have been strong. I thought he was going to be an invalid and when he got discharged I would be there for him. I did not expect that, although I would refuse to consult with him because I was scared to know the truth. I did not expect him to die but as a nurse I should have been aware of his death. I also blame myself that I should have been aware in January of what should be done. I should have consulted with him and asked questions that could have led to his recovery. Even though it is said that God determines one's life and death, I think He is selfish. Sometimes I do feel that way "crying". I thought I was getting better but it does not seem that way.

PARTICIPANT NINE

Interviewer: When did your husband pass away?

Interviewee: That was last year 2006 in August. He died of HIV-AIDS, and was mentally disturbed. You know the stigma associated with AIDS is unbelievable and hurting. You won't understand that until you experience it. People coming only after his death and even then, you could see the discomfort in their eyes, and question marks that they are not asking. I even thought that maybe they also saw me as infected but could not ask me. I would even ask myself why they are coming for the supposed support. They never came when my husband was sick. I did not even know how to respond to them. I did not appreciate their support. People know me to be infected.

Interviewer: Are you?

Interviewee: No I am not. What happened was that from the time we got married, about twenty years ago, my husband was working in another Province and would only come home for the Christmas holidays. I was used to that. He provided for the family. That I cannot complain about. However, in the past four years, he stopped coming home until last year (2006) for the Easter holidays, and was sick. I did not know what the problem was then. What I knew was that he was staying with a woman from my area. That woman was very close with my mother in-law. The whole township knew that. Can you imagine how I felt? I never had a good relationship with my mother in-law and she never liked me from the beginning. What I know about my mother in-law's feelings about me is that my husband has a child with one woman in the area before I met him, and I suspect that she (mother in-law) was disappointed that he did not marry that woman. She just never approved of me. When we got married, we initially stayed at my mother in-law's house even though I did not like it. We later built our own house and she told people that I was taking her son away from her, when it was an agreement between my husband and me. I did not care because I wanted to be away from her. Can you imagine living in the same house with a person that you know that she did not want you. Then, she would always want to know how much my husband sent me, and would not answer her. She used to tell people that I was a gold digger.

Interviewer: How did the other woman explain his illness?

Interviewee: You know, she told his family and not me that he became sick after eating an apricot, and they believed her. His family then spread rumours that I bewitched him. How can I bewitch my own husband? She never supported me.

Interviewer: What about her siblings?

Interviewee: When I joined that family, I realised that his whole family of origin did not like him. They were not talking to him and he would tell me that they have always been like that to him except his father who was by then, passed away. Apparently, before we got married, he used to give his mother money every month, and school his siblings and even provide for his elder siblings' family, even when they hated him. Maybe that was the reason they perceived me as a gold digger, when my poor husband was just focusing on his wife and children.

Interviewer: How did you manage with his nursing at home?

Interviewee: Because there are no adequate health facilities where we stayed, I moved him to the Gauteng Province, staying with his relatives who I knew supported me. I left my children at home because they were still at school and still are. Fortunately they are old enough to look after themselves and the house. It was tough caring for him. He was fragile and helpless. Mind you, the last time I saw him, which was four years ago, he was a healthy man. What was unusual then was that he avoided intimacy with me, but I just took it like that. It is only now that I appreciated that because he was avoiding infecting me. I really appreciated that because he showed me how much he loved and cared for my well-being. However, nursing him was a real challenge emotionally and physically. At times I would cry in private, asking God to take him, and would feel guilty about that. It was tough. We would talk and he would ask for forgiveness. How could I not forgive him? He would tell me about his mistress, who did not even come to my husband's funeral and how she used herbs so that he should stay with her. That I told him that I did not believe, and he must not waste our short time together talking about her. I said that because I felt that he was just trying to make himself feel better, and it was irritating me. I told him because I believed that with a CD-4-count of seventeen, he did not have much time to live, and we must focus on us as a couple, my future with the children when he had gone, and what he expected me to do for him. He had a flock of sheep, cows and goat at home and in the Vaal area where I nursed him. He asked me to sell it all after his death, and move from the Eastern Cape where we had a house with the children to the Vaal area because he did not trust his family of origin and would not be there to protect us. He also told me that medically we would be provided for. He insisted that we must be as far away from his family as possible.

Interviewer: Was he ever admitted to hospital?

Interviewee: Yes he was, with a CD-4-count of seventeen? He was never on antiretroviral treatment before and his doctor suggested that he must wait until he got to a CD-4-count of about fifty, and then he could start the treatment or else, he would die. He was then admitted and when he rose to a CD-4-count of forty-five, the doctor discharged him to gain more at home. By then, he could walk by himself and I had hope that he would recover even though I was aware that he would not go back to work. His mistress and my mother in-law would come to the hospital to see him.

Interviewer: Where was his family of origin and his mistress then?

Interviewee: You won't believe it. They heard that he was discharged and they came to demand him from me, the very people who hated him. It was his brothers, mother and his mistress. They told me that I bewitched him and they wanted alternative treatment, and also to check if I really



bewitched him. Mind you, his mistress is a witch doctor. My husband was so helpless, asking me to tell them that he did not want to go with them. His relatives, whom I was with, tried to fight them but they overpowered us. I also discovered then that they took his bankcard and had been drawing large amounts of money daily. He received a bonus that month. Also, they convinced my eighteen years old son to be on their side. My son was so disrespectful of his father and I. I could not believe it when he had to fight for his family. They took my husband and left. They told me that I would follow my husband and would make sure that I die exactly the same way that he died.

Interviewer: What happened to your husband thereafter?

Interviewee: They took him to a witch doctor and was apparently given enema of herbs, which drained him all the strength that he had regained. I understand the thrush that he had in his mouth was scrubbed with herbs, and was bleeding. He further lost weight and they came to get his medical aid card, taking him to another hospital. I gave them because they were aggressive. They did not even tell me to which hospital they were taking him. I was really hurting when I thought of how he needed me, helpless as he was. When I went to check with the bank, I found that they withdrew about twenty-four thousand rands, with the balance of eight hundred rands. I then asked the bank to stop the account.

Interviewer: When did you see your husband again?

Interviewee: A week later the hospital called to tell me that he passed away. That did not shock me because I expected that. I could not cry, probably because of the anger, blaming his family for their greed to the extent of killing their own blood. As a result, I do not trust them and never will.

Interviewer: What happened a week before the funeral?

Interviewee: I called his employer (Eskom) two days later because I had to arrange with his relatives who were supporting me to move him from the hospital to the private mortuary. His employer told me that his family had already been there, demanding money for the burial. They could not help them because I was the only beneficiary, and were very angry. I understand they were fighting with the staff, asking why their mother was not getting anything from the employer. They even told the employer that they did not know where I was because I abandoned my husband a long time ago, when their mother looked after my children. They also told the employer that my husband had other children and their mother looked after all those years when I had disappeared. They could not be helped and later came to ask for my husband's death certificate, and I refused to give it to them. The employer then gave me ten thousand rands for

the burial, and asked me to come back for the rest. When we went to the hospital to move his body to a private undertaker provided by his employer, they had already moved it and did not want to tell us where they moved him. I was hurting, frustrated and helpless. Eventually his employer told us where to look for his body and we found it. His family took his clothes and we found him naked. I decided to buy him pyjamas so that he could have something on. His relatives who supported me suggested that I should not go back home alone but would go with me and the body on Saturday and the funeral to be on Sunday. When we were about to leave the undertaker with the coffin, his brother and friends came running with his old clothes to him on. His brother had his clothes on, including his shoes. I could not believe it. That was the brother who hated him most. His relatives told him to go back and tell everybody that the funeral would be on Sunday.

Interviewer: When did you arrive in the Eastern Cape?

Interviewee: We got there in the evening and my friends were already busy preparing food for the following day. His family insisted that the ceremony be conducted at his parents' house, and it was done just that way. The way it was culturally done, the body had to wait at the gate, and a goat was slaughtered, the coffin spread with the goat's blood and was told that he was now entering his parents' house. We then walked in with his body, and an ox was slaughtered and the skin of the ox was brought in the bedroom, telling him that his blanket was ready. We discovered that his flock was missing, except that goat and ox. His flock in the Vaal was also missing. His cousin is now busy opening a case for theft. His supportive relatives insisted that it should only be my sisters and I in that room. His mother was there, sitting in a corner alone. It was traumatising to sit on the mattress with him next to me the whole night. I felt pity for him, to die with fights and noise when he could be surrounded by people who love him, making him feel loved and supported. He was very unfortunate to have a greedy mother and siblings. As I did not trust them, only my sisters could dish out for me with my own dish from my house.

Interviewer: What happened the morning of the burial?

Interviewee: He still had the pyjamas I bought him. However, there was a group of old women who were busy sewing a white hat, shirt and pants. I could not understand what that was for. In the morning they put him on those clothes on top of the pyjamas. He looked like a joke in that coffin. That saddened me. I could have done better. I was then given black clothes by my in-laws to put on, which I did. My supportive in-laws suggested that my family should cleanse me in May this year (2007). That would be then that I unveil his tombstone at my house. I will not involve them in that ceremony. We then went to the graveyard and came back. I did not feel anything because there was so much tension around. I did not even want to talk to my son because he

disappointed me, letting him be used by my in-laws as a weapon against me. He could not even protect his own father. Then a meeting was called where everyone said his piece. My supportive in-laws told them off. I then got a chance to tell them what I thought of them, and how they would not get a cent from my husband's inheritance. I showed them my HIV positive results and could tell that they did not believe what they saw. I told them that infected person was my husband's mistress and that they must look after her because they love her.

Interviewer: What happened the following morning?

Interviewee: His clothes were demanded and they were not there because they took them all. They actually had them on at his funeral. My supportive in-laws decide that I should go back with them so that I should start a new life, look for a house so that I can sell the one I owned with my husband after his unveiling ceremony, and move my children to my new house. My husband's employer is going to give me more money which I would use for the cleansing, the new house and my children's schooling.

PARTICIPANT TEN

Interviewer: When did your husband pass away?

Interviewee: In November 2005.

Interviewer: What was wrong with him?

Interviewee: It was Cancer. He was only sick for a month. You would not tell that he was sick. He was not aware of it himself. He went to consult with a General Practitioner because he could not swallow and had to drink water to help the food down his throat. The doctor was not sure of what his problem was and sent him to the hospital for tests. It came out that he had a problem with his throat but did not feel pain then. It was only after the tests that he started feeling pains in his throat. He underwent an operation and a tube was inserted in his throat and as a result, could not eat solid food. That tube was put in on the ninth of November and he passed away on the twenty-second of the very month. He was given a powder to mix and had it as his food. He could not even drink water with time but ice cubes to quench his thirst. He was later diagnosed with pneumonia and immediately thereafter he passed away in hospital.



Interviewer: Were there any signs that he was nearing his death?

Interviewee: You know, the day he went to hospital, he told one of my neighbours that he was going to hospital, and asked that couple to look after his family. The couple told him that he would come back and he told them that he would not, the reason why he was asking them to look after his family. He told them he was asking because his family was still young. I just took it like that.

Interviewer: How long was he at the hospital?

Interviewee: He left on a Tuesday, and on Thursday one doctor called me telling me not to come and visit my husband because he was being discharged. That worried me because the day before I was with him at the hospital and he did not look good. I went to tell the couple he talked to (supportive neighbours) about the call because I was with them at the hospital the previous day. I really relied on that couple because the lady was a retired nurse from that hospital. She then called the hospital to confirm his discharge and the hospital knew nothing about it, and suggested that if he gets discharged they would go and pick him up although I wanted to go to the hospital.

Interviewer: What happened that day?

Interviewee: In the early hours of the morning I received a call from the hospital telling me that my husband wanted to talk to me, and I must come to the hospital. I called his uncle and my neighbour couple and there was no answer. My daughter and I went to wake up the couple and I went with the lady to hospital. When we got there I left her behind, feeling that she was too slow. I waited for her at the door and she rang the bell and one nurse opened. We got into the lift to his ward and he was not there, only to find that he was moved to another ward. When we got there we were told that he was no more but was still on his bed. I was told to make sure that he was no more.

Interviewer: How did you feel?

Interviewee: I just saw darkness. If it was not for my neighbour, I do not know what could have happened to me. We were then told to come back the following day to fetch his body to our private undertaker. I refused post mortem that they were suggesting. We then went back home.

Interviewer: What happened there after?



Interviewee: The following morning my neighbour called the undertaker to pick him up and we went to arrange everything with the undertaker. My neighbour really helped me because I was like a zombie. We chose the coffin and what was needed for the funeral right there. It was bad because I even had to go for psychological help. I was not coping. I stopped those sessions because they called me a mad woman. You know how public hospitals are like.

Interviewer: How did you manage with the children in that state?

Interviewee: What made it worse was the fact that two of my three children are mentally disturbed. My husband's family have that mental disturbance problem. I just could not cope without my husband because he was a good provider although by the time he passed away he was on ill health pension. One of the twins was born like that and was also hit by cars on two occasions. She is a slow learner and that is really disturbing me. The eldest was fine and is in Matric but last week she was admitted in hospital. I do not know what the problem is but she is sedated all the time because when she gets conscious, she becomes aggressive and the ward staff is scared that she may injure herself. I really do not know what is happening with me and my children. I have high blood problem, and worried about my children if I can die.

Interviewer: What is wrong with your eldest daughter?

Interviewee: One doctor suspected that she was overwhelmed by the responsibilities she is faced up with. Her studies because she spends the whole night studying and is behind with her studies because sometimes she has to miss school and take his mentally disturbed uncle that I am looking after to hospital. Sometimes she takes me and other times her siblings. I think it is just too much for her to take. She is only eighteen.

Interviewer: Did you get any support from your in-laws?

Interviewee: Nothing. Instead, they caused me problems. The house that I stay in was my husband's parents' and all of them had died except his mentally retarded brother that I am looking after. After my husband's death I extended the house and that was when problems started, my husband's nephews and nieces fighting me and wanted me out of the house with my children. My couple neighbours helped me with that even though those children do come time and again. They even took me to the municipal offices fighting to get the house, calling me a woman from the rural area, when I was the only person in their family who is looking after their uncle without their help. The house was then officially given to me.



Interviewer: What other problems do you encounter?

Interviewee: In the past two months I have lost a sister, a brother, uncle and last week was my mother. I was very close to all those people. Every time there is death in my family, it always takes me back to my husband's. My uncle's son was the one person who would think of my children and I. He would bring us groceries because I am unemployed, but he also passed away. I also got support from my uncle.

Interviewer: What happened during the period before the funeral?

Interviewee: When my husband died, I was sick. He would take me to hospital when he himself was also sick. Even the day he died, I was supposed to go for a check up. Because I did not have money, my supportive neighbour gave me money to go for my check up. I could not talk. It was tough.

I had an insurance, which gave me ten thousand rands, which really helped. I was able to do what needed to be done. People were talking out there but I would know everything my in-laws were saying. My mother advised me to keep quiet and focus on the burial. My mother was also insulted. I was also accused of hiding my husband's insurance payout, and I refused to slaughter an ox for my husband. My supportive neighbour told them to buy that ox if they feel strongly about it. That was because I could only afford meat from the butchery. And then, as they are Zulus, they wanted me to also buy a goat, telling me that it was to welcome him home when the body came home overnight a day before the funeral. They were then told that that goat was supposed to be bought and slaughtered by my husband's family and not me. Those children were badly brought up. I wanted to stay with them but the way they were disrespectful, I could not.

Interviewer: Can you share with me your experience of your husband's body coming home overnight?

Interviewee: I was not aware of his arrival. I just saw the coffin coming into the bedroom. Since his death; I stayed in the bedroom on the mattress. It was unusual because I realised that he was home after a long time, about two hours later. I am not sure of what was happening with me, because I used to lose consciousness. I was told that I had a mild stroke. You know, I cannot tell you my experience the day of the funeral because I felt like I was in a trance. I do not know how the funeral service went. One of my old madams that I used to work for as a domestic worker heard that I lost my husband, and she sent me oil that I used to sniff and my headache would go away.



Interviewer: Did you put on black clothes?

Interviewee: No I did not. They told me that I could not because my children and I were sick, and would not be able to take them to hospital as I had to be home before sunset and as a result, it would restrict me. They thought that after the death of my husband I would follow him because of how sick I was. My husband also thought that I would die before him. I even booked a grave next to him.

Interviewer: Were there other rituals that you went through?

Interviewee: My brother brought me herbs to clean myself from the inside. He is a traditional healer and would bring them personally from home. Even the cleansing ceremony was done by my brother at my mother's house. My in-laws wanted nothing to do with that, probably because it involves money. According to the Zulu culture, they were supposed to have cleansed me first, and then my family at my parents' house.

Interviewer: What is the significance of the herbs that a widow has to boil and drink its water?

Interviewee: It is a mixture of herbs. You mix "mosetlha", "mosiane" and "motlhoswane", boil them and drink that boiled water. That is to help the widow clean her late husband's blood out of her blood system. That is also done to help the widow to be clean for her possible next husband, or else that man would also die. Those things happen. My priest died because her girlfriend was a widow and did not cleanse herself. His tummy and legs were swollen. That is called "magoma". She came to me for advice but it was too late because the blood of her girlfriend's late husband was flowing in his blood stream. That priest was still married to his first wife, and the two girlfriends that he had were fighting for his corpse until his wife came to fetch his corpse.

Interviewer: What does shaving symbolise?

Interviewee: The hair that you had before your husband's death is shaven away to clean you of everything on your body when he was still alive. It is another form of cleansing. You do not ask but do what is supposed to be done because we witness some of the after effects of not following tradition. If you do not follow tradition, you encounter problems and have to slaughter unnecessarily, which is costly. You are forced to slaughter an ox that you could not afford when the deceased was still alive.

Interviewer: How long did it take before the cleansing ceremony?

Interviewee: It was after six months. In rural areas a widow is not supposed to just walk around in the community because people own sheep, goat and all. So, if a widow walk around and an animal walk on her trail trail, it dies. Even a child also dies. It dies of what is called “metlhala”, (trail) where the middle of his head stops moving, constantly vomiting whatever he ate or drink, and its eyes dropping in. In Western culture it is called meningitis. At the hospital a child will be on a drip in its head to help alleviate that. Now black people know how to treat the condition. There are herbs to treat that. Those herbs are boiled and the child drinks the boiled water. Because of the vomiting, the child becomes dehydrated and is given a lot of plain boiled water with sugar.

Interviewer: What kind of experiences did you go through after the burial?

Interviewee: People always come and tell me what those children are saying and I tell them that they are my children and if anything happens to anyone of them, they are my responsibility. Whether they hate me or not, I will remain their only relative left and I will do what is expected of me. The fight revolves around this municipal house. After the funeral when everybody had left, I was with those nieces and nephews who left one after the other. My couple neighbours would come bring my children and I food to eat, and sit with us. My uncle and mother left later but were there for me. Those nephews and nieces learnt their unacceptable behaviour from their aunt who would always fight me and chase me out of the house. What an ungrateful family. My husband would not know what to do about his sister. She died before my husband. Today I am accused of not looking properly after my mentally disturbed brother in-law when they themselves are far from him. My brother in-law’s problem is that he does not want to bath. I buy him clothes and would tell me that the clothes that I buy him are for people who bath. He is better now because my son from my first marriage now stays with me and forces him to bath.

Interviewer: How do you manage financially?

Interviewee: My children get government grant, which helps a lot. Also, one of my brother in-law’s uncles would bring us groceries as and when he can afford. I really appreciate that.

Interviewer: Do your siblings help you in any way?

Interviewee: They have a problem with me, referring to me as a white woman because whenever there is the death in my family, they sit back and expect me to run the funeral. I buried my mother alone. Instead of helping me, they were saying things about me. I had funeral insurance for my mother, which helped me to run the funeral without problems.

Interviewer: Do you have any physical problems?

Interviewee: I struggle to fall asleep. I would sit and think of my deteriorating health, my small unhealthy children when I am unemployed, and my in-laws who are not united. I am also suffering from arthritis.

Interviewer: When are you planning to erect a tombstone for your husband?

Interviewee: I do not know because right now, I just cannot afford it. I cannot even afford to pay water and electricity, pay school fees and uniform, all of that. My in-laws have erected tombstones for everybody in the family six months ago except my husband. They did not even know where their graves were and I gave them all the information. My children were hurt by that and did not go to the ceremony.

Interviewer: How do you feel now about the loss of your husband?

Interviewee: Whenever I am asked that question, tears just drop down. He was a good provider when he was still employed. As he was working shifts, when he did night shift he would always call from work checking on us if we are fine. Even today I would think of him when the time he was used to calling comes. It is painful. He would do that every night. I cannot sleep without a sleeping tablet. Even then I would only sleep for an hour. I always tell my children about how good their father was. He never abused me physically. Even when we disagree, he would try to show me his point of view with respect. He always used to make it a point that when he leaves for work, he made it a point that we are both happy. He would tell me that he did not want to leave and die in an accident when we were not in good terms when he left for work. I miss him and what he used to do for us as a family. He would even give my parents money and buy them clothes. We never used to starve. There are days when my children do not have bread to eat. I sometimes make them dumpling with the flour I buy at times. It is worse now after my mother's death two weeks ago. I still have to go back to hospital because even now that we are talking about my husband, I have a headache on the left side of the head.

FR. LIAM (CATHOLIC PRIEST)

Fr. Liam was interviewed to get a better understanding of the rituals which some of the Catholic Participants of this study practice using, for example, the Holy water, and receiving Sacrament,

etc. Fr. Liam is Irish and did his ministry in Italy. He came to South Africa in 1964 where, before then, he settled in Lesotho to learn the language. He was then based in Sharpeville ever since. His main role in the church is to train new priests, conduct Mass in the neighbouring townships, the roles that he had been playing since 1964. During the old South Africa, he became the target of the ruling party, as his Masses tended to be right wing.

Interviewer: From the Catholic perspective, what is death?

Interviewee: From the Catholic perspective, death is just simply leaving this life and going to life in heaven or hell as the case may be.

Interviewer: For a dying person, how do you interpret that person's experience, as you probably deal with dying people in your profession? What you see, what they go through, how they interpret their feelings, etc.

Interviewee: Well, that depends on the individual. There was one lady who died in this parish in the middle of last year (2006). She was a very good Catholic with a very strong faith. She knew she was dying. She had cancer. She had brain tumour and was operated. She thought she would recover but she said that she was always ready to go if the Lord wanted to call her. Because of her faith, she knew that she was going into the next life. She was not afraid and was quite resigned and accepted that situation. As I have said, it depends on how deep one's faith is in the next life. For example, one can sum up the whole attitude towards death, as Franciscans, in the words of St. Francis. During his life he wrote what is called "The Canticle of the creatures", where he praises God for the sun and the moon and the sky he walked on this earth, and so on. As he was dying he wrote another verse, which said, "all praise be to my Lord for sister death, from whose embrace no one can escape. Blessed are those who she finds doing your Will, the second death can do them no harm. Those who die in mortal sin will go into eternal punishment." So, that's more or less the Franciscan and Catholic attitudes to death.

Interviewer: Does it mean that belief helps one to go through the fear of the unknown?

Interviewee: Yes, with this lady I'm thinking about now, she certainly had no fear of dying. But even if you have a strong faith, the fact that you are facing something unknown I think makes everybody afraid. For Catholics, those who have a strong faith, know that they are going to God if they had lived a fairly good life. St. Francis says, "those who die in mortal sin separate themselves from God and will be punished. It means that they probably came to a point where they lost their faith and as far as they are concerned they do not know where they are going."

Interviewer: Can you differentiate between a dying person who is not afraid because of his deep faith and the one who is afraid?

Interviewee: In what way?

Interviewer: For example, if you know that the dying person has deep faith and, as a result, you expect him not to be afraid. Let's say two people whom you know to have deep faith, but one is afraid and the other is not.

Interviewee: I think if you have strong faith you can face death. There would be very few people who would face death as peacefully as this particular lady I told you about because even if you have strong faith there is still the fear of the unknown. You don't really know how this is going to happen and where you are going, etc. So there is always that fear of the unknown. But as I say, with a strong faith one believes in God and knows that he is going to fall into His hands so that no matter how they die they need to go. But it does not eliminate fear completely because human as we are we are afraid of something that we do not know.

Interviewer: Don't you think that one's personality also plays a role?

Interviewee: Yes, it has a lot to do with it because people who are naturally fearful will obviously be fearful despite their deep faith. However, their faith would calm their fear a bit. If the personality has fear in it, one will not do away with it completely. That is why I say it depends very much on the individual, personality, and the whole conglomeration of things.

Interviewer: Now, when you say that, you make me think of the soul and the spirit. What is the difference and what happens during the dying process?

Interviewee: I do not know. That is part of the unknown. All we know is that the soul leaves the body and that's it, and the soul goes to be judged by God immediately after death. Then you know if you get a ticket up above, down below or in the middle place.

Interviewer: During the dying process of the individual, how do you deal with the family?

Interviewee: In actual fact, I have only been present at one death that was this lady I'm talking about. Now, she had dealt with the family herself during the six months whilst she was fairly in good health. She was very resigned to whether she was going to die or get well and so on, and she had more or less prepared them and so, it did not come as a shock. At the same time as I

said I was there at the moment she died and, of course the whole family started crying, the usual reaction to somebody who belongs to you dies. So you just stay there with them, be with them and remind them of what their mother had said.

Interviewer: After the death, what role does the church play?

Interviewee: Well, after the death, part of the grieving process is the funeral service itself. The family brings the body to church and praying for the person who had died. At the end of the ceremony after Mass we have what is called the final prayer of farewell, just letting go of the person who had died. I think that bringing the body to church, and going through rituals of blessing and the prayer of farewell and accompanying the body to the cemetery really help the grieving process and helps the family to let go of the person who died.

Interviewer: what does the holy water symbolise?

Interviewee: As you know, when the person is baptised, he is baptised with water. When the body is brought into church, the coffin is blessed with holy water, as a reminder of the fact that this particular person was baptised and through baptismal became the child of God.

Interviewer: When you bless the coffin, why the coffin and not the body, why not open the coffin?

Interviewee: No, although some people would like that but I have never had the experience of doing that. When the person has died, we bless the body if we happen to be there at the death. When it comes to the church, some families leave the coffin open for viewing, when some do not want that. So, we just take it whichever way the family wants. So when the coffin is brought in, we bless the coffin together with the body that is in it as a reminder that this particular person was baptised with water and became the child of God.

Interviewer: What does the incense symbolise?

Interviewee: Once again, the body is brought in front of the alter, we say Mass, we do the readings, reminding people from John fourteen when Jesus says do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God and believe also in me. In my father's house there are many rooms. If not I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come and take you myself to where I am. That summarises the ceremony. Sometimes we use St. Paul when he said, "I do not want you to grieve like people who have no hope". He is not saying that he does not want people to grieve, but grieve with hope. At the end of

the Mass we have the prayers of commendation, commending the dead person to the Lord, and giving prayer of farewell. While that is going on, we bless the coffin again, and then we use incense. The use of the incense is that this particular person was the temple of the Holy Spirit. In other words, his body was something sacred. So, the incense is just a sign of honour to that person.

Interviewer: Still in the funeral service, what other rituals are there?

Interviewee: That's basically it in the church.

Interviewer: What about the Sacrament received during the funeral service?

Interviewee: You mean the Eucharist, i.e. the body of Christ? That is mainly for the people who are at the service and are Catholics.

With the person who is dying, for example, the lady I was talking about, I was there when she died. About an hour before she died, I was called and she received the Sacrament of the sick, which forgives her of her sins. This Sacrament is for someone who is dying and nervous, or who is very sick, this Sacrament brings them a sense of peace and it calms them, and helps them to be more ready for their death. We also give them Viaticum (padkos), food for this final journey. That is all concerning the communion as far as the dying person is concerned. At the end of Mass, nowadays it is becoming more and more common that people are cremated, which is not such a good help for the grieving process. I think it's much a greater help in letting go of the person in going to the cemetery and to have to see the coffin going down. It is a helpful ritual.

Interviewer: Now this lady who passed away, what happened after receiving the Viaticum and Sacrament of the sick?

Interviewee: She was already unconscious, and was sleeping away, and she was getting weaker and weaker and she died.

Interviewer: How did you deal with it?

Interviewee: We were reasonably good friends. It would not be the same as let's say burying my mother or my father or my family member. Because we conduct so many funerals, a lot of them are people we do not even know, we get used to it. Now, with this particular lady, we were friendly, but not deep friendship. So for me it was not that difficult.



Interviewer: At the graveside, which other rituals are conducted?

Interviewee: The coffin is brought in and as soon as the people have gathered together, we bless the grave. These horrible things that lower it automatically then lower the coffin down. I then take a handful of clay and sprinkle it on the coffin and I say to the person that he must remember that he is dust and will return to God until the last day. That's it.

Interviewer: Some of the Participants of this study always talk about taking the Holy water home. What is the meaning behind that?

Interviewee: The Holy water in the Catholic tradition is for blessing places. Now and again, people will be worried about evil spirits in their houses, and would ask me to come and bless their houses. It is a way of driving out evil spirits. So, quite often people would come to the church and we usually bless water here at the church. I have never been to a place where the Holy water disappears as quickly as it does here. In the prayers we bless the Holy water, we pray that wherever this water is sprinkled it will drive out evil spirit. So people come for the water as a kind of protection for their homes.

Interviewer: Before the burial, there is what is called a night vigil.

Interviewee: Well, once again that depends a lot on the culture. In Ireland in the old days, we would have what is called a wake, where the body is. Neighbours come to sympathise with the family and console them. Tobacco would be smoked and whiskey would be drunk, to be part of the farewell. Now because there were lots of abuses about that, people getting drunk and so on. Now the custom is that the evening before the funeral, the body is dropped at the church, and they have a short vigil just on prayers, and the people can go home and drink if they want to, leaving the body behind. As you know in the African tradition, the night vigil is very common. It's more an African tradition than a church tradition, but we go there for readings that relate to death, and songs and prayers all during the night. In a way it is a way of Christianising what the family would be doing anyway.

Interviewer: There's this ritual of ashing windows during the period between the death and the burial. What does it symbolise?

Interviewee: That does not happen anymore but I know that there was a custom of turning mirrors on to the wall and what the meaning of that was I really do not know. It is just popular

customs that people had. It had nothing to do with the church. That does not happen anymore except in very rural areas.

Interviewer: What other rituals have you witnessed that families practise?

Interviewee: Nothing really. My own family, when my mother died, she died in an old age home, and the body was brought from the old age home straight to the church. There was no wake and we as a family had no rituals to conduct and just followed the way of doing things.

Interviewer: Did you run the funeral yourself?

Interviewee: Yes, I did. It was not too difficult to deal with because living in South Africa I would see my mother every three years for a month or two. It is difficult but we manage.

Interviewer: How does your Black congregation integrate Catholicism and their African culture?

Interviewee: You have to ask them because it again depends on the individual. Some are one foot in the Catholic Church and the other in ancestors. They do not work together, but most practise both. The church is trying to help people get rid of their fear of the ancestors and the fact that people are trying to combine the two does not work.

Interviewer: Don't you think the church should take into account the context within which their congregation functions?

Interviewee: The question of ancestors should be put within the context of what we now believe as Christians. Let's say my grandfather if he was a good man he would probably be in Heaven. If he was a bad man he would be in Hell. So, if he is in Hell there's probably nothing that he can do for me. If in Heaven I can pray for him and he can help me. So you cannot lump all ancestors into one box.

Interviewer: It's like saying Virgin Mary is the Catholics' ancestor.

Interviewee: We look at St. Francis, St. Anthony, etc. as our ancestors. Some members of my congregations were good Catholics with a deep faith and I have no doubt that they went straight to Heaven, and they are my ancestors.



Interviewer: What is purgatory?

Interviewee: The doctrine of purgatory is this that when you die you may not be ready to go to Heaven and would have to be put into the washing machine to get yourself ready for Heaven. As Christians, most of us are wishy-washy. We may be living a reasonably good life as Christians but not ready enough to stand in front of Jesus Christ and face him immediately but have to go into the washing machine (purgatory) first, until one is ready. Remember once you die time ceases to exist.