

Honouring Survival:

Is there a

rule book?

by

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A c k n o w l e d g m e n t s

This dissertation came to fruition through the massive efforts of so many people. It represents a communities' weaving of hearts, hands, minds, and resources. Woven into the very fabric of the research is an array of textures, tears, laughter, criticisms, fears, hopes, and a huge amount of courage to risk doing something so new.

To borrow a notion from Cathy Freeman's Acceptance Speech for her Olympic Gold Medal 2000, 'to name individuals would risk forgetting someone', and there are so many people I love and who care for me, who helped with this research, all of whom I am indebted and eternally grateful to, if I try to name people, I am bound to omit someone. Therefore, I will not try, you all know who you are, and how dear you are to my heart.

I would like to send a huge colourful canvas of gratitude to everyone who has been supportive not only of me personally, but for those who have been supportive of this research from its earliest conceptions to its fruition.

This means I address my thanks towards participants, family, friends, university colleagues and lecturers, and to all those who have played editors, chef, house keeper, gardener, washing person, or research assistant for me (both locally, Nationally and Globally).

Honouring

I want to dedicate this dissertation to so many people's honour, but I would run out of paper naming them all.

I dedicate 'Honouring Survival: Is there a Rulebook?' to everyone, here, or ripped from us, who has lost love and life by the hands of homicide.

A b s t r a c t

This qualitative, participatory research, explores how people who have experienced the homicide of a family member (secondary homicide victims – the participants) express, and explore their experiences. Through this sharing of their insights, the reader gains awareness into how they have made sense of their lives since their loved one's homicide. In particular, the research was curious to establish how participants defined experiences in relation to their lives, relationships with others, social institutions, and the world.

Losing a loved one through homicide is an elongated complex. Resulting in a reconstruction that enables secondary homicide victims to continue in a world that has irrevocably changed

The research identifies that there were both common and unique components to the experiences explored. Factors such as gender, socio-economic status, sexuality, age, race, disability, the nature of a relationship between the secondary participant and the primary victim and/ or the perpetrator, as well as the *mode* or *context* of the homicide, appear to influence the meaning making process and the meanings that are made about the experience.

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F o r e w o r d

There I sat, in the cafe looking through the plastic surrounds, which are designed to keep the wind out. I noticed how the tarpaulin swayed, gently - then suddenly it would slam - jarringly, almost annoyingly against a post, which prevented it from swinging freely, like a pendulum.

The plastic surface was not taut - you know how it dimples – it reminded me of the skin on Gran's rice pudding. Turning my gaze - through the plastic to the trees beyond with their Australian shades of green and brown, I became aware how the scene was not sharp or clear. It was a strange effect, a surreal, blurred image. My mind drifted off. I wondered, was this how a fly saw the world, through those multifaceted eyes they have?

The view was beautiful and colourful, somehow it resembled my life, not clear, not broken, or in poor repair, rather just flapping in the breeze, transparent, public, yet there were pieces concealed - in the blurring. The plastic was like a symbolic barrier, dividing my realities the two worlds, the two lifetimes...

Introduction

A TABOO SUBJECT

As I began to think through, let alone write this introduction, I came across several blocks. After much consideration and reflection, I concluded that these blocks stemmed from my difficulty in introducing the topic of homicide and its impact to a reader - especially a reader who has direct and close experience of homicide. My hesitation was connected to the absence of 'nice' feelings attached to this topic. Homicide has few positive connotations to it. Ironically, I had been trying to avoid introducing any negative emotions. I became acutely aware that homicide is a topic that most would wish never to need know about, except at a safe remove.

Intertwined in my resistance was having to stop and consider *what* led me to writing this dissertation. Further, I am uncomfortable thinking that people might see me as the expert, as I did not plan to be one. I have fallen into knowing this subject. I was thrust into knowing it experientially. As people came to me with questions, often looking for support with their own pain around homicide, I needed to know about homicide from a wide number of perspectives. I made the conscious decision to learn about theories associated with grief, loss, trauma, and justice in order that I might practice in this taboo field effectively. From my own experiences, I knew such practice was needed.

My putting pen to paper for this dissertation was finally initiated when I watched a movie, *The Theory of Flight*. It examined the different life experiences a person is robbed of when they have a chronically acute physical disability. It examined how disability is constructed in western industrialised societies. Afterward I felt an overwhelming urge to go to the cemetery. On my way there, I realised that the cemetery was symbolic of where my knowing began. Reflecting on the movie while at the cemetery, I drew parallels between losses through death and through disability.

Thinking, how living without a person (due to their dying), is indeed a type of disability – one that is often cloistered and silent. Death in our culture is acceptable when it is due to natural reasons such as illness, or old age. Death is not invisible in our society. Yet our rational and logical sides do not cope well when we think of homicide and murder. When we *know* it was within *a* human being's power to have prevented someone's death, it is harder to accept death.

This process inspired me to start writing. I pondered; theoretically do I start with criminology as murder starts with the criminal? On the other hand, does it? Does it start with the environment - the social conditions? Should I look at anthropology, sociology, criminology, and then victimology?

I began to question, where does homicide start and where does it end. Concluding, there are no clear boundaries. So then where does grief begin - with loss, if so where does loss begin? Does it begin with having, knowing, being; or does it begin with ending, losing? I do not know, nor are they questions this paper aims to examine.

In my literature review, I have been able to access vast amounts of information on homicide perpetrators, their needs, and rights. Information on victims of crime in general, or the criminal, legal, policing, and social aspects of homicide, is less prevalent. Only a handful of texts examine murder or homicide from a secondary victims perspective (interestingly those that do are written predominantly by social workers). Most of the information is not directed at multiple audiences, including the family members of murder victims as readers, rather, they are aimed at guiding 'therapeutic,' 'policing,' or 'legal' interactions with a family. There are numerous press articles, yet most are brief and address only one aspect of this complex social issue. There are a number of autobiographical and biographical accounts available, but most are based on American experiences or situations of mass murder.

What became apparent is that there appears to be two distinct aspects to homicide, the personal, and the political. There are massive amounts of literature relating to the political, a little on the personal, but little looking at how families see the relationship between the two. One wonders how does the political construct and impinge, shaping the personal experience? This research seeks to explore this and other issues from the perspective of families.

For ease of reading I will refer to secondary homicide victims as 'orienteers', my reasons for this are discussed on pages 132-134.

Chapter 1

JOURNEYING INTO THE WORLD OF HOMICIDE

Have so much fun
That I'll hear you laugh
And then I'll know I'll never be alone

(Ann O'Neill 03/09/94)

One night in August of 1994 I was suddenly thrust into a whole new world, one that no longer included the two most precious and dear people in my life, Kyle and Latisha, my children. They had been murdered. I was there when this happened and I was critically injured, as there was also an attempt on my life. Gradually I learned how to live a totally different lifestyle.

The challenge to the world I thought I knew, and you might think you know...

This meant that very early in my adult life (aged 24) I learnt that the degrees of harm I had previously experienced or believed to be possible within the family and/ or in a circle of intimate friends, suddenly appeared to be minuscule. My prior belief system was suddenly irrelevant, particularly in relation to the possibilities of harm. As a young person, I never had considered the possibility of someone I loved being a murder victim.

Granting that someone I knew or cared about might be robbed, assaulted, raped; I never considered the prospect of anyone being murdered. During my divorce, I had considered that I might be murdered. That concept even now, is more comfortable than the concept that my children might be murdered.

Focusing on how harmful living, and some people can be, and how tenuous life is, I begin to feel quite uncomfortable. Considering that 'someone' as opposed to 'something' may initiate a death, or that life can, and often is extinguished by another person is disquieting. Those around us become suspect. Without such consideration, suspicion is directed toward those unknown to us (in line with the psychological concepts of 'fear of the unknown'). Much research suggests that people are at most at risk from people they know, and in their own homes (**Western Australian Police Service Crime Information Unit 2000**). How does one's conscious and consistent admission of this to oneself allow daily functioning?

Searching For Meanings

Soon after this traumatic event, within months, I set out to the local library to find what I could do to begin to reconstruct a life for myself. I was shocked and horrified at the lack of literature available to this end. There was a lot of information on murderers, or on grief as the result of suicide, sudden loss, and terminal illness. However, there was none specific to what it is like to have someone close murdered, or how to cope with being a family member of a homicide victim. There was no book that identified the different social institutions to be encountered, or the lack of control and choice that I experienced.

Originally, I thought I must have been looking in the wrong place for this information. Surely, given that murder has been happening for hundreds of years, people left to deal with the ramifications must have been studied or spoken out at some time in history. Six years on I have found little literature specific to *living* after someone in your immediate family has been murdered (being a secondary homicide victim/survivor).

Much of the documentation seemed to be in the form of autobiographies or biographies, which are valuable. Yet they do not relay a cross section of possible experiences. Searches of databases reveal that secondary homicide victim/survivor's experiences are on occasion included in broader studies of victims of crime. This category is so broad, whilst the issues of secondary homicide victims/survivors are very specific and different from those of other categories of crime. Literature from self-help groups providing contextually bound (as it should be) introductions to the supports one might need, who can provide it, and experiences a secondary homicide victim have emerged over the last fifteen to twenty years, particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom and gradually on the Australian East coast. Due to non-uniform criminal justice systems this literature is often irrelevant for people in different states. Recently more formal types of research have begun to explore this area from the perspective of those with the experience in a manner that does not seek to apologise their experiences (Braithwaite 1984; Beresford 1996; Harrison 2000; Jarrett 1997; Lee 1996; National Organisation of Victim Assistance 1985)

Limited meanings available

On occasion I found studies and books about compounded, complicated, dysfunctional or unresolved grief and trauma, none of which helped me to feel 'normal' rather I felt like some sort of failure. The content of this literature did not describe my feelings or answer any of my questions.

Exploring new terrain and new roles

The more I explored, the more people I spoke to, the more aware I became of the wider social and political contexts. There is very little communication about the experience in its totality from victims/survivors perspectives through to those involved in social and organisational systems. Experiences in the court system have been examined (The Ministry of Justice 1997; Victims Advisory Committee 1996). During the last five years, I have been in close contact with people who have lost loved ones through homicide and have been active in political and educational arenas. I had this privilege as the result of being the founding Convenor of The Homicide Victim's Support Group (WA) Inc. This role saw me walk beside other secondary homicide victims/survivors in a process of mutual support. I am often disgusted with the way society treats us, horrified that there are few avenues for our voices to be heard publicly and heart broken by the lack of resources available to meet our needs.

The more I thought and understood about the subject of homicide the more I realised many people think of, and construct trauma and grief as a homogenous experience, which is not my experience.

Meeting other seekers of meaning

My reflected observations during this time have two key aspects. Firstly, despite the diversity of circumstances and relationships within each secondary victim's experience, there are common experiences. Secondly, in the political and professional community and the wider community, there is a thirst for knowledge as to how and what can be done to better meet the needs of secondary homicide victims/survivors. This has seen me develop and deliver educative programs to police personnel, speak at rallies and to the media about the issues orienteers struggle with.

This growing community interest is reflective of and parallels an international growth in victimology since the 1970's. Globally there have been many broad studies undertaken in relation to all victims of crime. Many say this shift grew out of realisations such as the following:

Practitioners and academics in the justice system realized that the system did not serve the victims of crime. Instead, it "used" them to obtain needed information, cooperation, and services, for example as a witness without giving them any active role, respect, or consideration in return. In essence, it was said, the system "re-victimized" the victim.
(Viano 1990: xi)

Things that are difficult to know

Alongside this global shift in criminal justice ideologies, there has been a perceived rise in crime rates. According to (Sullivan 1997:11) “in the Australian context Homicide (including murder, attempted murder, manslaughter and causing death by driving) nearly doubled between 1964 and 1993.” In the current western industrialised setting, contentions and statistics vary as to whether the homicide rate has increased or not. News items give the impression that murder is becoming more commonplace. A high proportion of news reports and current affair shows relate to the topic of homicide, as do story lines in many of the most popular television series and movies. “In fact, many official statistics of crime are subject to serious error and may be almost as misleading as the general impressions formed by the public through the news media, particularly if they are used without an understanding of the processes by which they are compiled and the limitations to which they are necessarily subject.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1999)

Seeking Deeper meanings

Desiring to better understand my and others experiences of homicide, I sought to gain entry into the Social Work honours program at Curtin University of Technology. This research opportunity has allowed me, through exploratory qualitative methodologies, to rigorously research and recount my own and others’ experiences of homicide. From this, further more focused research may begin (Kvale 1996:98). This research sought to honour the commonalities in secondary homicide victim’s/survivor’s experiences, without diminishing the uniqueness of each loss. The title of my dissertation, ‘Is There a Rulebook?’ arises from the fact that often others and I ask, “How can we get through this?” and jokingly say, “Where is the rulebook?” Added to this was “Honoring Survival” the term my wonderful supervisor said to me when discussing my proposal.

I believe that there are many dilemmas faced by secondary homicide victims/survivors. For example, how does one admit and deal with the fact that *someone* not *something* has done this to a loved one. Addressing such dilemmas that others and I have experienced and still face as secondary homicide victims/survivors, I introduce to you this topic “**Honouring Survival: Is there a Rule Book?**”

Chapter 2

A MAP OF MY APPROACH TO THIS TOPIC

Knowledge that does not come through the heart is dangerous

Anita Roderick, 13/11/00

In exploring this topic I need to be clear on how and why I chose a particular methodological approach to this topic. In this chapter rather than reviewing the extensive literature on homicide, I have looked in depth at the literature relating to the epistemologies, values and approaches of different research traditions, before locating my approach to my topic of homicide experience and articulating my method and design for the journey. I felt like I imagine a racehorse to feel as they approach the racing barriers. I imagine horses know where they want to go (the finish line) and that it is important to get there fast, but do they too, question which barrier will accommodate and complement their goal, and how will the jockey (as one who has a vested interest) participate in this?

What I wanted to know

I wanted this research to explore how people who had experienced the homicide of a family member (orienteers) expressed their experiences. In order to gain insight into how they had made sense of their lives since the homicide, I was curious on a number of issues. I wanted to know if they mentioned (and what they said about) the experience in relation to: their lives, relationships with people, social institutions/ structures they had experienced and how they now understood the nature of the world. How and what did they reflect on the experience and its impact on them.

I brought with me some assumptions

Through my previous experiences and involvements as and with orienteers I knew that often, many orienteers expressed they felt like they did not have a voice, were overlooked, or misrepresented by society as a whole. The lack of research available from this perspective perhaps validates this type of feeling (Lee 1996; Harrison 2000). The increasing emergence of self-help, support groups, and lobby groups appearing internationally and nationally perhaps indicates that we as a group are moving to action on this (Giuliano 1998, Beresford, 1996; Casey 1994; Hocken 1996)

I also assumed that as orienteers we are not constantly victims or survivors and the very words tap into an 'either', 'or' dichotomy, so I assumed the use of the word '**orienteers**', as an alternative ways of seeing victims.

I did this as this alternative terminology allows for fluctuation, and self-identification, of context. During discussions with (Smith 2000), a police officer experienced in working with post-homicide families, we bantered around the notion that people who lost loved ones through homicide immediately become an 'orienteer.' We concluded this, as they have to learn to negotiate their way through a completely new landscape. One that often includes, new terrain, of the police, the coronial system, the court system, the parole system, the medical system, the deceased estate legal system, superannuation laws, and so on. Alternately they may not encounter any of these systems other than the police, as their loved one may be missing presumed murdered. In such cases, people have to orientate themselves to learning to live, in the absence of any, even unfamiliar, systems. By continuing to breathe and survive, secondary homicide victims become 'conquering orienteers'.

Whatever the (circumstances and) particulars orienteers must quickly learn to adapt and survive. The inherent sense or image that the term *orienteer* conjured in our minds was one of mastering new skills and surviving in hostile or foreign terrains, often in situations without maps or recognisable landmarks, so the word *orienteer* fitted well for us. Where it lends itself well to the text, I will utilise the term orienteer, however dominant associations, or common language styles, may overshadow its use.

Existing Literature – mud maps

This literature is extremely limited on the topic of experiencing homicide in the family. There are broad and informative articles, but they did not discuss what I wanted to discuss from the emic (insider) perspective with which I wanted to approach the issue. Lee (1996:27) and Harrison (2000:34) both employed semi structured interview techniques to explore the experiences of specific people involved in homicide. Lee looks at the impact on siblings of the deceased. Harrison, (2000) in contrast looks at the experience in terms of the victim offender relationship (as perpetrated by a stranger) and the need for a multidisciplinary approach. Both pieces of literature are rich in information, which contributed to the initiation of the creation of a pool of emic knowledge, (whilst facilitating their Social Work, Honours Degree, and Masters Of Philosophy Degree (respectively)).

Questions about what is important in a research approach

I felt uncomfortable with some aspects of their methods. Lee's I did not feel allowed her to position herself as both etic to the research process and emic. Harrison did not position herself in a way that would have helped the reader know the purpose of her research.

I wanted to position and include my experiences throughout to increase my transparency. I did not want to restrict what co-researchers could talk about by asking about a preset list of topics. I wanted to ensure that my approach would maximise orienteers' opportunities to identify and express the facets of the experience that they saw as important. Finding out which methods and traditions of research would accommodate these desires whilst maximising the integrity and transparency of the research process was a large task. Fortunately, there was a vast literature on the subject.

Ways of thinking about the world and knowledge

We live in a world that is full of competing epistemologies (ways of knowing) (Malpas 1998; Kvale 1996; Reason 1999). There are many different and interacting schools of thought. Going by numerous different titles (note the list below is not exhaustive), in the totality one can identify two broad categories of ideologies, framing knowledge of the world. These frames shape how researchers can know the world, and the relationships they have with each other, their environment, and the universe. I will briefly explore these two broad areas of thought.

The first school of thought stems from the Western era of 'enlightenment' that followed the 'renaissance.' During the renaissance, it was believed that God controlled the world and what human's knew. In the age of enlightenment that followed, scientific knowledge first became credible and believable (Gorman 1993; Schon 1991). In tandem with this, a reductionalist scientific paradigm of knowing the world came to be understood as the means by which to control, and conquer, an isolated truth (Hitchcock 1989) Related or subsequent paradigms encompass objectivism, modernism, individualism, and positivism (Crawford 1999; Grbich 1996; Adamopoulos 1994; Pfuhl 1993). This tradition is understood as being based in patriarchal values (Rowan 1981a). These related schools of thought are known as positivist ideologies.

Alternately, though not dichotomously there are the constructivist, or post-modernist, universalist, relativism, interpretist, and narrative framings of knowledge, which argue there are many ways of knowing, and there is no one objective truth that exists waiting

for us to discover it. Rather, that there are many truths. All descriptions of truth are dependant on issues of interpretation and the context of those seeking answers or questioning (Rowan 1981a; White 1995; Reason 1999; Kerby 1991; Schon 1991). These schools of thought believe that the gender, race, power, age, experience, and the discipline of the seeker of meaning will impact on the truths and meanings they make. Knowing is seen as relational. These factors also impact on how each of us is in the world, how we behave and think about ourselves (Rowan 1981a; White 1995; Reason 1999; Kerby 1991; Schon 1991; Grbich 1996; Adamopoulos 1994; Pfuhl 1993). Yates (1992) identifies that these approaches have brought “some new and important dimensions. One is the concern with oppressions and differences, which are not reducible to one single framework (most notably seen in the emergence of the voices of feminism and of post-colonialism).” This explains why these schools of thought are associated with being based in feminist values (Rowan 1981a). This thinking can be named as interpretive feminist approaches.

Ways of thinking about research

Reasons' (1999) identified four types of scientists: the analytical, the conceptual, the conceptual humanist, and the particular humanist. The first two are grounded in positivist ideology, where as the second two are grounded interpretive ideologies. These reflect how one makes sense of the world and knowledge (White 1995; Hartman 1990)

Ways of approaching research

There are two distinct traditions of approaching research (Elden 1981; Hitchcock 1989; Schon 1991). Any research examines and makes decisions about four things. That is, what is identified as needing investigation, how the investigation is to be done, how and by what means will the data be made meaning of, and what is the application of the research. Essentially, the approach taken to these four elements will be directed by the purpose and values of the researcher.

Motives for doing research and values inherent within them

What differs between these two main schools of thought is ‘how’ they identify a research topic and ‘who’ is involved in any identification, and ‘how’ they set about exploring it and with ‘whom’. This variance results from differing values held by the researcher (Reason 1999; White 1995). Contemporary contexts see that a struggle, although less fierce than previously known, still exists between positivist and interpretist disciplines, as to who has the right to claim their knowledge as legitimate and who doesn't (Reason 1999; Denzin

1998). However it is commonly accepted that interpretive research is important and has a place in the creation of research (Kirby 1989; Kvale 1996; White 1995)

My tools to deconstruct different research approaches

In deciding how to think about this research, I utilised what (Elden 1981) identifies as four core elements of research, (the inception context, methodology, interpretation, & application) together with (Rowan 1981b) three concepts to be considered when critiquing and considering a research approach.

In critiquing and adopting an approach Rowan suggests researchers are well informed if they first consider three core concepts. These being, “alienation, social change, and the research cycle” In an examination of **alienation** one might question the following. If, and how, the research approach, and process, alienates the researcher from the researched. What level of participation does each party have in the approach and the process? He asks does an approach view the researched from a perspective of ‘other,’ does it allow space for the researcher and the researched to know each other, or does it lock them into fixed separated roles, which may inhibit them from even knowing themselves.

He then suggests the examination of the inherent potential for **social change**. Rowan, states, “Research changes the world in three ways: it makes a difference to the researcher; it makes a difference to those who come to know about the research; and it makes a difference to whatever is studied. But in social research we are talking about who rather than what, and the last of these becomes very important indeed.” (p.96-97). This makes it important to ask from what and whose perspective and value base is social change being constructed, and is it conducted with the aim of making a difference in the lives of those researched?

Rowan, (:97-106) further questions where the researcher and the researched are in relation to each other. That is who participates, and when. This defines who has the power to control the process, and at what stages the voices and knowledge of the researched is valued.

My approach and values

Using these questions, I established that I would approach this research process with an interpretist feminist epistemology, as this reflected my values. I value the idea of doing research that involves people as active and equal participants – co researchers. I wanted to learn from and with participants. I see participants as the holders of important,

valuable knowledge; who generously trust and share that knowledge with a researcher. I wanted participants to be actively involved within as many components of the research process as possible. To do the research in a manner that was empowering for participants, giving them the opportunity to be active, not only naming their experience, but also in how it was to be communicated to the audience, via the research document, was appealing and exciting. I sought a research process and approach that would value this, and my voice and experience, not exclude it, given I am both a seeker of others emic knowledge, and simultaneously a holder of my own emic knowledge. My positioning in both spheres enhances the opportunity for relational knowing (Denzin 1998)

This ontology also connects the subjective to the objective, the personal to the political. White (:214) identifies that a research approach should seek to acknowledge the personal and political consequences of any research. Looking at these two elements mutually involved in the construction of experiences, one sees that this connection is important in gaining a broad view of an issue or experience (White 1995:217; Crawford 1999). This combined with the aims or desired outcomes for research directs ones approach. This research wants to allow the opportunity to understand the individual experience, the personal (Howe's (1998) 'seekers of meaning', and Reason's (1981) 'particular humanist') from the meanings made by those with the experience. I also seek to link this to the political or macro context ('consciousness raising' (Howe 1998) and 'conceptual humanists' (Reason 1981)). This will allow the opportunity for deep rich holistic insight to be gained into contextualised experiences. There will also be the creation of an opportunity for participants to inscribe their previously marginalised (Kirby 1989) experiences on society instead of only being inscribe upon by society. Thus the opportunity for the mutual constitutive production knowledge (Kemmis, cited by Crawford 1999) exists in this approach.

Multi dimensional aims for research

The above epistemology allows the research to be aimed at multiple audiences for multiples purposes. My primary aim is to provide orienteers with an opportunity to utilise a place and space from which their voices can be heard, whilst attaining my Bachelor of Social Work Honours. Connected to this it is aimed at providing interested people including those working at a structural/ political level with a resource from which they can access emic knowledge about the homicide experience.

The ways of knowing and the approach to be taken

Choosing and identifying the most suitable approach as ‘in-depth interviewing’, was consequent on my approach being based in emancipatory, interpretive and feminist thinking, ideals, and values.

Such approaches rely on statements such as Hartman’s, (1990:3) that “there are many **truths** and there are many ways of knowing.” Josselson (1995:32) tells us “meaning is not inherent in an act or experience, but is constructed through social discourse.” Holstein, (2000) discusses the **self**, and how it is through our interactions with people, the reflections and responses our behaviour and thoughts receive, that we develop a sense of self, therefore “the *individual* selves arose out of the *social*.” (p. 4). Narrative thinkers add that these truths are negotiated and passed through the language communities of people use to tell of our experiences. The Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, (1995) summarise this when defining ‘the Narrative approach’ as being:

...based on the idea that the lives and relationships of people are shaped by the knowledge’s and stories that communities of people negotiate and engage in to give meaning to their experiences. These have real consequences. They are not merely reflections or representations of our lives – they actively shape, constitute and ‘embrace’ our lives.”
(Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia 1995:18)

The thinking, ideals, and values that the participatory, narrative approaches holds as central, are aligned with my values and those expressed by many of the possible participants during my discussions.

My tool for collecting knowledge from its Care takers

Kvale, (1996) defines a qualitative in-depth research interview as

A construction site of knowledge. The knowledge generated by interviews is related below to five features of a post modern construction of knowledge: the conversational, the narrative, the linguistic, the contextual, and the interrelational nature of knowledge. These intertwined features are taken as a starting point for clarifying the nature of the knowledge yielded by the research interview and for developing its knowledge potentials.
(Kvale 1996:42)

Participatory approaches to research

This led me to refine this method even further and to identify that I was doing emancipatory, participatory research. Emancipatory appealed because it allows opportunity to regain power over one’s experience, participatory, as I value the things

identified by (Elden 1981) as inherent in participatory research. Elden (1981) states participatory research is an approach that involves those directly by the experience under examination in all four components of research (the inception context, methodology, interpretation, & application) (Elden 1981:258).

Participatory research is broad in nature, which sees that it encompasses other approaches, all based on the same core values, but each a little varied in their methodology. It encapsulates approaches such as, Action Research (Wadsworth 1997), Collaborative, or Co-operative Inquiry (Reason 1999), and Indigenous based Research (Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia 1995).

The basic premise of all participatory approaches is as follows. Researchers need to be positioned within the research, with the aim of researching 'with' not 'on' people (participants). The way we know our experiences is constructed through all interactions (White 1995:218) this does away with notion of objectivity or neutrality. The context of the knowledge is fluid it is constantly changing. Therefore, generalisations or rules are not sought by these approaches. Knowledge is still seen to be legitimate when it comes out of idiographic experience.

Many theorists have discussed notions of humans as constructed interactively to the stories and scripts given and received in social processes. Through such discussions, knowledge is legitimised and valued leading often to a sense of emancipation (Burr 1995; Riessman 1993; Fisher 1991; Rees 1991; Lincoln 1985). Narrative approaches fit with this epistemology, as they too assert the power of a research process and the valuing of shared creation of knowledge that occurs as a result of the conversations. The telling of, and listening to each others story is identified as emancipatory (White 1995; Kvale 1996; Kirby 1989; Kerby 1991; Holstein 2000).

Accepting the notions of interpretist thinking, in particular the epistemology and ontology of the participatory and the approaches it encompasses, I will frame and convey the emic knowledge of the participants, their stories. Throughout the discussion of the sensitive and personal knowledge I have been trusted with by participants, I will interpret the participants stories and the relationships of their stories to the broader context, the political, in line with the values I have espoused to within and throughout this document.

Chapter 3

PREPARING AND PLANNING FOR THIS JOURNEY

Think before you speak is criticism's motto; speak before you think creation's.

(Augarde 1992:115.14)

(My preparation has involved a little adherence to both of the above-mentioned creeds.)

What is the research exploring?

I am embarking on a journey into the world of other secondary homicide victim/survivors to express and explore our homicide experiences, as co-researchers.

Throughout the journey, we will be exploring our perspective of how we have made meaning following the homicide of our loved ones. Researching individually and in dialogue how we have made meaning of the world, our lives, and the people and social processes we encounter. (These four areas of our experience will form a broad basis of my discussion and my framework for analysis.)

My exploration of this topic will be done from a postmodernist perspective. That this is such a sensitive issue has meant particular attention had to be given to the methodology. Harrison (2000) and Lee (1996) both considered this factor in their studies. Harrison eloquently summarises why a qualitative approach is more appropriate than quantitative one when she says:

The limited availability of literature in this field, and the sensitivity of the subject matter, demonstrates the appropriateness of the use of a qualitative approach. This was raised by Bowling (1997), who suggests that: 'the demonstrable advantages of qualitative methods have been shown in situation in which there is little pre-existing knowledge, [or] the issues are sensitive or complex' (Bowling 1997, p.312)
(Harrison 2000:32)

This journey is informed and guided by notions that "models of inquiry are both "expression and explanation [but these are] not competing modes but as poles of a dialectic: any complete model must eventually show how these two complement each other." (Reason 1988:83). The concept of 'inquiry' as the telling of a story or stories, and notions that the "...storytelling presentation [is a] tale brought to life by a combination of the tellers' personality, emotions, insights and ability, plus the special feedback which

comes from the audience and helps the teller to create magic with stories. It is essentially a sharing experience” (McKay 1996:8).

Considerable consideration has been given to the ramifications participating in this research may have for people, both emotionally and tangibly. Lee (1996) had considered the issue of re-traumatisation, due to the sensitivity of the topic. I questioned if I would not only be re-traumatising people, but would I be exploiting them or possibly leaving them vulnerable to being recognised, since I could not offer anonymity. After many conversations with other secondary homicide victims/survivors, I concluded that although there would be some emotional cost, the media has already identified most people, and many secondary homicide victims/survivors value the opportunity to talk about their experiences. To avoid exploiting participants, I seek to resolve this by being transparently honest with participants, that this research is for my studies, that the results may be widely distributed and they would not be directly paid for their participation (though there may be unanticipated rewards to being heard in this way).

Where am I in relation to this research?

Given my biography, I needed to maximise my potential to be transparent, so I positioned myself within the text, and made use of a reflective diary. I participated in a ‘self interview’ (Kirby 1989:28) in order to show my conceptual baggage, that is, I positioned my self in relation to the research question in order to show my prior beliefs and experiences. I participated in the research as the first orienteer. I hoped by going first I would avoid saying things I knew other people had not mentioned, which I might assume were important to include.

The Self Interview Process

I utilised a **story-telling technique** in my interview, to distance myself. It meant I was freer in my expression and not censoring the content (Gersie 1991; Reason 1988). The process, introduced to myself by Finlay, (2000), which involved telling ones’ individual story/narrative in the third person and then having it told back to you by the listener. I adapted this so the retelling back to me was done, in the first person tense via the text. It was an incredible experience. As someone who has great difficulty verbalising my innermost feelings, I decided that this technique would allow me to get out of my head and into my heart. Reason & Hawkins (1988) discuss how distancing oneself from the story can free the teller from expectations, and allow a space for new meanings to emerge. For me, it meant I was safe to express my thoughts and feelings and I was more

empathetic and honest about the horror of what had happened to “Ann.” A trusted fellow student interviewed me, and a third party typed out the self-interview transcript. It was too difficult for me to do, and I feared I would edit too much out.

Who will gain from the research?

This research will be for three groups. Primarily, current orienteers as it will provide an arena for people with the experience to share their realities and have their voices heard (Kirby 1989). Secondly, it may be a resource, for future secondary homicide victim/survivors, that inevitably will come. Thirdly, it has the potential allow insight into an area that hopefully they will not experience first hand but may encounter in their work or social relationships.

Locating and inviting participants

Identifying and Locating

There are many variables involved in homicide cases, to choose a sample with similar circumstances would not represent the diversity of experiences. I did not seek to be objective, rather I strove to be transparent, and genuine in this inquiry into how people make meanings of their experiences. I have relied on the following methods.

Sandra Brown's, (1991:186-187) "*Counselling Victims of Violence*" identified six categories (types or modes) of homicide; I employed five of these to facilitate the involvement of people with a variety of homicide experiences from a cross section of circumstances.

Extending an Invitation

I conducted a practise interview before I had someone interview me, for my interview, which filled the multiple homicide category.

I divided the names of all the 74 orienteers I knew, (regardless of how well I knew them), in accordance with the type of homicide that had seen them lose their loved one. I put the names for each category in a bowl and one by one drew them all out, recording each one as I went. This is known as 'stratified random sampling' (Kumar 1996). I then telephoned the person whose name came out first and invited them to consider participating, and arranged to call them a few days later and find out their response. My rationale for this method of invitation was people may feel re-marginalised, ostracised or rejected, should I send out letters to all potential participants, receive an overwhelming response rate, and then be able to select only four, thus, excluding some respondents. In my mind, to risk people potentially feeling this way would be reckless and unethical. Would I be inadvertently, yet very overtly re-silence those already marginalised in society

(Kirby 1989)? I decided that should a participant decline or withdraw their involvement, I would return to the invitation stage.

The first person I approached from the singular category agreed, as did the person from the serial category. I ran into difficulties when trying to define what was ‘accidental’ homicide, as the one person whom I knew declined my invitation. I modified this category to include vehicular homicide as part of accidental homicide, and thankfully, my networks led me to someone who had experienced an accidental/ vehicular homicide, and who agreed to be interviewed. I tried with no avail to use my networks to locate someone who had experienced a ritualistic homicide.

Again I reframed, thinking that I could interview someone whose case was unresolved, however there was only one person I knew who fitted this category, who when I invited her/him to participate, declined. Further investigation revealed that most people in this category could not participate without jeopardising any investigative or legal proceedings. Again, I rethought my framework, noticing that I had interviewed two people who had lost children, and two who had lost siblings. I decided to reframe the final category to ‘the loss of a spouse’ and the first person I approached agreed. The interviews therefore show a variety of *modes* or *contexts* of homicide, these being multiple, singular, serial, and accidental/vehicular homicide, from the various *relational* perspectives, of two mothers, a brother, a sister, and a spouse.

The information was gathered from each participant during a one hour interview and during subsequent conversations, either on the phone or when meeting to negotiate the written ‘individual realities.’

The Interview Process: Conversations to texts

The interviews were done at a mutually convenient time and place. Each one was approximately one hour in duration, and was taped, and later transcribed.

The then necessary transformation of the interviews to texts, and the drawing out of themes was conducted in a manner that is aligned with my belief that “our analytical interpretations are partial, alternative truths that aim for ‘believability, not certitude, for enlargement of understanding rather than control’” (Strivers, cited in Riessman 1993:424).

The interview was guided by prompts as opposed to questions. The prompts revolved around the themes of a story being made up of Roberts (1999) notion that a story needs to include the events, how a subject has been changed by them, and reaction of those

around them, and the extent of those reactions. Thus my themes to prompt were ‘the events’, ‘changes’, and ‘reactions’, and ‘anything you might say to others in similar a position’. I also asked if the participant thought knowing my biography and experience of homicide had impacted on their agreeing to participate.

Subsequently I distributed a full transcript and a suggested rework of each interview to the relevant participant, which they considered for a few days before we met for a second time, where we edited the first draft in accordance to their wishes. I went away, made the changes, and returned the draft to them, leaving a few days in between for it to be considered. We continued to meet in this fashion until the participant approved of the text.

During the subsequent meetings, I asked each participant three questions. These being, 1) was it difficult to read your reality when it was typed up? 2) Did this process impact on you? If so how? 3) What motivated you agree to participate? (Please note that I use these and the question about my background, to guide the written discussion of participant’s reflections).

This close negotiation with participants for the textual retelling of their individual realities, and the naming of their chapter, stemmed from my acceptance of post-modern notions that meaning is made subjectively, in relation to dominant discourses, and that language is the conveyor of often-specific subjective meanings. This process accepts notions that language constitutes reality (Kvale 1996:43), and an awareness that language does not exist in a vacuum separate to society and its dominant discourses. My language usage was given particular attention, I was also cautious that I did not inadvertently change the language of participants in accordance to my meanings.

An outside perspective

In writing the research proposal, I began to realise that people had assumptions about what the experience might be like. I realised that I had had prior notions of what it would be like. For example I thought that if something like that happened in your life, people could not be anything less than compassionate and caring. (I could not however access any other implicit prior assumptions I had held.) Thus, I decided that I would interview someone without the experience. This would allow the exploration of another social construction of the topic. I identified strongly with Janoff-Bulman’s (1992:4) assertion that “surely our basic assumptions may be more private and less elegant than theories that

guide scientific observation and research; yet they are no less important as guides for our day to day thoughts and behaviours.”

Confidentiality and anonymity were offered to this participant; so all identifiable characteristics were removed. I ended up approaching an acquaintance of mine on the basis that she is reflective, and articulate, and we had a prior relationship so some degree of trust already existed. The latter was important throughout this process; I think it was extremely necessary due to the sensitivity of the topic.

The idea of starting this process and presentation of knowledge, with someone who was not a secondary participant was to briefly explore if and what preconceived thoughts of what homicide might be held by someone. How might any perceived notions, relate to the five experiences expressed? What ideas might one have about what would happen after a homicide? If there can be prior assumptions, how inherent are they, and do we think about it consciously?

Application of this research

The finished product seeks to provide an informative and educative tool. This may be of use to secondary homicide victims/survivors (current and future), professionals, and individuals seeking to understand how people live with the legacy of a homicide. Foremost, this process and the research dissertation will allow spoken voices previously marginalised in society to be heard. Thus, I will be researching from the margins (Kirby 1989), which relies on ‘the margins’ being understood as “the context in which those who suffer injustice, inequality and exploitation live their lives” (p. 33).

I believe that the issue of homicide is one that, despite a high probability of holding broad commonalities, each individual makes their own unique meaning about. This meaning is not fixed. Rather, it is continually influenced by social forces such as faith, life stage, relationship to the primary victim, socio-economic status, gender, sexuality, the circumstances and particularities of the murder, educational background and so the list goes on. Self-narratives will allow each individual to identify and define their experiences in their own manner.

The Personal Narrative Group reiterates this in the following statement:

When talking about their lives people [may] lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet, they *are* revealing truths. These truths don’t [necessarily] reveal the past “as it actually was,”

aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences.... Unlike the Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. Sometimes the truths we see in personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters “outside” the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them.

(Personal Narrative Group, 1989:261, cited in Riessman 1993:22)

My chosen methodology is post-positivistic, interpretive, and narrative which authors Kirby, (1989: 44) summarise as:

... a continuous process that begins with a concern that is rooted in experience. The research process consists of planning to gather information, actually gathering it, and making sense of it; concurrently the researcher engages in a process of self-reflection as one of the participants in the process of creating knowledge.

Arrangement and presentation of the research

This research will be arranged in the following format. Firstly, it will be contextualised, in relation to the existing research, social trends, and my own life experiences. Moving on from there, I will present each of the six narratives (individual realities) separately, including my interview. I will then bring together what I see as the compendium of the process and draw out the implications for social work practice in particular, and peoples’ understanding in general.

Framework for analysis

When I began this process I had no idea how to analyse the data. I found it difficult to preempt the best method, as I had no insight into what the interviews would illicit. Thus I went to this part of the process with a heuristic mindset. After the interviews were completed, I looked at the data, and decided the best way I could manage the data was to sort it using the four sub-areas of exploration. These being our perspective of how we have made meaning of the world, our lives, the people and social processes we encountered. These four areas formed the basis for analysis, arrangement and structure of the data and subsequent discussions.

Ethical considerations

Anonymity and confidentiality

I struggled with the notion of anonymity and confidentiality, which are believed to be requirements of an ethical study. The problems I foresaw were that in a city the size of

Perth it would be very difficult to think that one could provide these things with simple name changes. However, if one changes the circumstances of the homicide, how can one fully represent the issues that may have been experienced? Would I be re-victimising, re-marginalising the realities of the participants, and doing further injustice by creating an invisible victim by changing circumstances and names

I consulted with several people; particularly those from the Homicide Victim Support Group (WA) Inc. (HVSG) who are all secondary homicide victims/survivors, on an informal basis and asked their opinions. Who overwhelmingly said they would want to use their real names and real circumstances.

The decision was that I would not offer confidentiality or anonymity. In order to highlight that homicide is a real event, that takes real lives, and happens in real peoples lives interviews would use real names. To prevent people's family members being recognized, I have not used last names nor have the interviews named other family members. This was decided, as there were ethical issues about 'who' agreed to participate and to be identified.

The question of what someone could say in relation to the perpetrators of such crimes was raised by members of the HVSG. We discussed how many families live with the knowledge that the perpetrator(s) will, one day, be released from prison, which many felt was or might be an issue for discussion in itself. The dilemma was how to discuss this and other issues without allowing too much focus to rest on the perpetrator? It was decided that this would overcome by referring to the perpetrator(s) by name once in the written narrative and subsequently as "the perpetrator(s)" - this may seem like an objectification, but is used as a buffer, to avoid allowing the focus to shift from the secondary homicide victims/survivors.

The other ethical consideration here was that we could not name or refer to anyone who had not been found guilty of willful murder, murder, manslaughter, or any other charge in a court of law, unless they were dead, without risking being sued for defamation or slander.

Data: storage of

Information collected and stored (e.g. tapes, transcripts, notes, and draft dissertation) will be kept in a locked drawer. Each interview will be numbered and labeled accordingly. Given, that I am not offering confidentiality or anonymity, the content of such documents refer to the individuals by name, **except** in the case of the person without the experience of homicide. All information, excluding the final dissertation, will be stored for 12 months after the completion and then destroyed.

Closure

All participants, and my supervisor were encouraged to have a copy of the final dissertation, and were invited to receive them at a gathering of all participants in order to allow the opportunity for some sense of closure and celebration, and informal debriefing.

Chapter 4

PRECONCEPTIONS OF THE WEATHER

The philosophy which is so important in each of us is not a technical matter; it is our more or less dumb sense of what life honestly and deeply means... it is our individual way of just seeing and feeling the total push and pull of the cosmos.

(William James cited in Janoff-Bulman 1992:4)

Natasha, is a single non-Indigenous Australian woman in her early 30s, has a tertiary education, and works in the human service field. Natasha and I met through work. We describe our current relationship as more than acquaintances but less than good friends. That is to say, Natasha knows of my experience but has no intimate knowledge of it.

I invited Natasha to participate; as she is a reflective open person, whom I believe is able to be honest about what influences her. A level of trust already existed, that would allow us to discuss such an intimate and confronting topic.

The interview took place in an informal setting, a bench in the open garden overlooking Perth's North Eastern hills.

In reflecting on the interview process we discussed how just knowing of my experience influenced how Natasha broached the topic and the way she communicated. Natasha mentioned that she did not want to be too upfront or clinical, she wanted to use appropriate terms and to be sensitive. Natasha's patience and time in this process is gratefully appreciated and acknowledged.

I imagine the homicide of a loved one might change the lives of a family in the following ways

Broadly speaking, I would think that I would have issues around safety and security. I am sure there would be changes around that. I would have to be grieving... and there would be changes in my life due to that process.

I imagine some of my perceptions might change or shift in terms of the people who perpetrate that type of crime, as well as other families who have experienced a homicide. I wonder how compassionate or forgiving I might feel to someone who – to a perpetrator of the crime. I imagine that would be the main challenge. How I felt about the people around the perpetrator may change as well, for example their family or supporters.

It is difficult to tell how people around me might react - I can foresee relationships might change because it is such a difficult thing to deal with. Some people might not be able to deal with it that well, and relationships that I thought were fairly secure or not secure might change or shift after an experience like that. So, my thoughts about other people, their motives and our relationships could change.

It might change my views on how I perceive other people. On a wider scale it might affect my total worldview in every way. I might become very angry with the world in general, or very upset that the world is a crappy place and view everything much more negatively. It could change my total worldview rather than just on certain people or circumstances.

I might become either less or more tolerant and compassionate towards people, situations and life in general. It might change my priorities in life and set me off in a completely new direction or life path. I imagine that I would question my spiritual ideas and beliefs, perhaps the whole meaning of existence or life. I wonder whether I would start to think or feel like a victim – helpless and powerless – in more than just this experience. Would I take it on as a role, expanding to other areas of my life?

There are so many things that might change and at this point I find myself influenced by things you have said to me before. I am thinking of going through a grieving process. Some people don't allow for that space. So, however long my grieving process might be, people who I thought were supportive of me and close to me might have a different view of the grieving process. People may not be so supportive of me in terms of "come on get over it – it has been long enough now," or not understand what I might be going through with time. The experience of grief, not only in a homicide, may be too confronting for people – anybody including myself – to look at, talk about or deal with, in any way.

On the other hand, I think some people who weren't very close in my life could be a little voyeuristic, wanting to know more about it or find out details. People who might not ordinarily come to know me or have much contact with me might want to talk and know details. I can see that human beings would be like that.

I think there would be some kind of feeling of tip toeing around or walking on eggshells, in relation to what and how people talk about it for both the secondary victims and their friends and family. There might be feelings of being more wary about what you say or

how you broach subjects as a secondary homicide victim. However, I imagine that is more the other way around.

I wonder how public your life would become. Especially given that we are in a fairly small city here and given the media, I think that might make a difference – bring about change. I suppose a factor, in ‘what’ changes, would be how accurate the media reporting was in the first place. If it was not very accurate, there might be some anger and frustration around what sort of things were being talked about, or if it were unduly intrusive I would feel very violated in that respect by people I had never met before. How far reaching that would be, depends on what sort of media coverage there was. If it were print, people don't recognise your face, unless there are photos. Or if there has been television coverage then your actual face could be known, that is to say your identity or more than just your name. And in that case I think I would feel very (long pause) naked – exposed by the fact that any body at any time might recognise me.

Just the idea that more than the people who are around me and the people that I choose to tell about this know about it -- I don't like that idea. I imagine I would feel very much like my privacy would be violated, I think that would affect me quite strongly. I don't like that idea that people I don't know – have never met - might know who I am, my situation, might be making their own guesses or assumptions.

My immediate thoughts were of the negative kind of media coverage, I wasn't thinking too much about the positive stuff. Accurate and sensitive reporting *could impact on the experience* and I feel that would be a supportive thing. I would be able to say ‘yes someone's got it right or someone understands to a certain extent’, so that would be positive and quite affirming.

Safety

Immediately I think of my safety, and security in my home. I can't imagine how far-reaching safety aspects would be. I guess it depends on the details of the crime and how it happened. However I imagine just in my own home, would I want security devices, to make sure that no one could get in and hurt me? When out in public how safe would I feel? Would I feel the need to carry extra things on me, to be able to ensure my safety? Would I want to go out in public? Maybe I would want to hide away for a while.

It could have an effect on how I feel about other people's safety. In terms of I wouldn't generally advise other people what to do; I might be much more concerned - vocal about

other people being careful or something like that. If it were a random thing then there must be some fear of it happening to other members of the family. I wouldn't like to be trapped by it. Maybe it would end up closing in around me and it would create its own prison so to speak. There are so many different directions I guess I could go... (Laughter). I might be really vocal and active, trying to safe guard other people from that kind of experience.

The duration of Grief and returning to activities

I think that is very individual and personal. I think I am quite – I don't know if indulging is the right word to use but, of my self so I don't think, --- oh no I don't know. I am thinking for myself, if I had to compare myself to other people maybe I might be on the longer side rather than the shorter. I have to wonder if you could ever get over that sort of experience.

Thinking about work... I imagine that there would be a certain compulsion after a certain amount of time that I would have to be starting to get back on track in terms of the practical aspects of my life. I really don't know how long that would take; I don't have anything to measure it by. I don't have any idea about what other people think about what the average time should be or something. I guess that depends on your physical health as well. I would like to think that I would take as long as I could. Financial factors must come into it as well. If I had to get back into it, then I would have to. There might be factors in there that I don't really have too much control over, in terms of finances, working.

Would I even feel like cooking for myself or eating, doing the housework, taking care of myself? Doing things on my own, like going for walks in the morning like I do. How long might it be before I felt like I could find enjoyment again in life? Would I keep my misery alive for longer because I might feel guilty about being alive when my loved one(s) no longer was/were?

I am trying to think of the different aspects of it. Like one thing, popping into my mind is about socialising, getting out, with people again. I would hope that I would give myself just as long as I needed. But given the way I think about myself at the moment, when I think, 'oh gee I haven't seen this person in quite a long time, I should really catch up with them'. That element could come into it. Maybe I would force myself to get out a bit earlier than I might actually feel like doing it. But as to how long that would be, I don't

know. (Long long pause) It depends on so many things... Maybe less than two years. I don't know (laughter).

Supports I might need

In terms of non-professional support, I would need my family and friends around me, to be there when I needed them, but not to be too intrusive or pushy. Having my own space. Maybe always wanting people around, - the need to not be alone, it could be 'being on my own that I would have to start doing again. In terms of perhaps more organised, or professional, community support, I would imagine that I would want to be having some sort of counselling for as long as I needed to.

I wonder would I need to talk to other people who had had a similar experience. With people who might have a better understanding, so that I wouldn't feel quite so alone. There would be other things that might come into it if there were some sort of facts to do with my psychological aspects. If there were physical aspects to it as well, I would have to address that too. They are the main things that come into my mind.

I could need any kind of support. It depends on my circumstances. If I'm quite physically impaired, I might need in-home care or a support service of that kind. It depends how debilitated I am by my psychological state of mind as well, whether I could support myself independently or not. May be for a while I might not feel that I could or that I wanted to. I feel that would be more about family helping out there or staying with family rather than any sort of community, in-home support. Getting out and about, there could be transport issues. If I were feeling unsafe, would I want someone else around with me wherever I go? Would I feel the need to have someone to call at any hour, if I needed to? Which might be a mixture of both family or friends or some sort of community or professional support. It is possible that I might even need some sort of a hospital admission if I am not coping very well, I don't know if I would want or need medication. What if I had medical and or clinical costs, especially ongoing? There might be significant financial pressure, debts, which would contribute to my psychological stress levels as well as the practical aspects of actually generating the money needed.

It just occurred to me, what if I was someone who had a young child or family? How much would I feel like having to be responsible for another person, a baby, kids, or whatever? That would be pretty difficult. Choice wouldn't come into it too much. If you haven't got many other supports to help you, then you have to do it.

The likelihood of homicide affecting my life

I think it would be very unlikely... *not* simply because of the 'oh you know that's all right nothing ever happens to me' type of thinking, or 'I'm going to be all right that only happens to other people'. 'I think it is unlikely not just because of that but because of my family, I mean I don't feel that there would be anyone in my family who might do something like that. Thinking of the people around me in terms of friendships, I would like to think, that I won't/ wouldn't draw that experience to me. However, that strikes me as a very judgemental outlook regarding other people who have lived through homicide. I think sometimes you just never know. People can take you totally by surprise. How do you know, how do you trust people enough, to know exactly what they are like? So there is the possibility.

Actually, when I was talking, and said something about my family - there actually is, ah... There is the possibility that that might happen one day. I could be a secondary homicide victim; it would be another family member in danger of being murdered, rather than me. However, that is hard to say - the unpredictability of the person. (Laughter) I don't venture near them very much though, I would think that that were less likely.

If a homicide were going to happen anywhere, I think it would be there. I still think that it is fairly unlikely, but it is not as removed as I thought at the beginning. I am thinking about all the circumstances, and I would think at this stage and in the future, it would be pretty unlikely. Then again, how can you predict these things? That would be pretty scary. (Pause) I am thinking of a situation where I was at one point a bit worried that this person was going to pull a knife on us all. That was very scary.

I am not sure that *it* went through my head that he/she might kill me. I was just frightened the person would pull a knife on us. I don't know if the word 'dying' specifically went through my head. I don't think so. There was the fear that that might happen, and I knew that we had to get out of there. I guess if someone is going to do that then there are not many other alternatives. Strange as that might be, I did not think they would get a knife and then stab the stuffed toy. I presume if they are going to go for the carving knife, it is going to be aimed at one of the human beings in the house. I don't remember consciously thinking those things. I think about that from time to time... (Long pause)

I imagine a family would experience...

I imagine there would be a whole questioning around why it has happened, why it has happened to their loved one, what went on, wanting to know what happened. The questions would be different depending if any family was present when the murder happened/occurred

'What a loss it must be' and a struggle - trying to come to terms with losing someone, making some sort of sense out of what has happened. Whether they felt any blame or guilt, if they felt 'if only this' then I could have prevented it or made some difference, it depends on the circumstances. There could also be anger.

While thinking about the above, I imagined a family of parents. I was being quite specific actually; I think I was thinking of kind of an older or adult child, and that the family entailed the parents and other siblings. I did not think beyond that. I was thinking that the person who had committed the crime was someone that they knew rather than a total stranger. I was not thinking about a child or someone young or any thing like that. I think I was thinking more about domestic violence type situations that had progressed to actual murder.

Influences on my perceptions of who this happens to

Statistically, certain crimes are more likely to have happened with certain people, for instance sexual abuse is more likely to have been perpetrated by some one you know and who is close to the family. I am not sure how much that is true in terms of homicide, how much more likely it is going to be someone that you know. I have much more of an idea about sexual assault or domestic violence say than the figures on random or not even just random, known or not known homicides. I would have to think using my common sense that the majority of people are murdered by someone that they know. Although, thinking about that further I think my initial 'common sense' has probably failed me. Whether that is very close or a bit more distant. Like family or family friend circle as opposed to my drug dealer who I know - (Laughter) - That kind of thing. Or I am the drug dealer and they murder me cause I know how... I... [Are you meaning close as being a relative or an intimate as opposed to known being a friend or acquaintance?] A friend is in there as part of close rather than acquaintance.

Public portrayals of murder make me think...

About the media, and how intrusive the media can be. Maybe some other circumstances are influencing what I am thinking. I imagine that it would be terrible to be faced with

media at that time. The last thing that you'd want in your face is the media and people wanting to talk to you and stuff. I don't know how much that happens, but if it did, I think that that would just be terrible. I am wondering how much I am influenced by other types of crimes and how the media goes on about them. Maybe that's more to do with when things get into the justice system, I mean the courts or something.

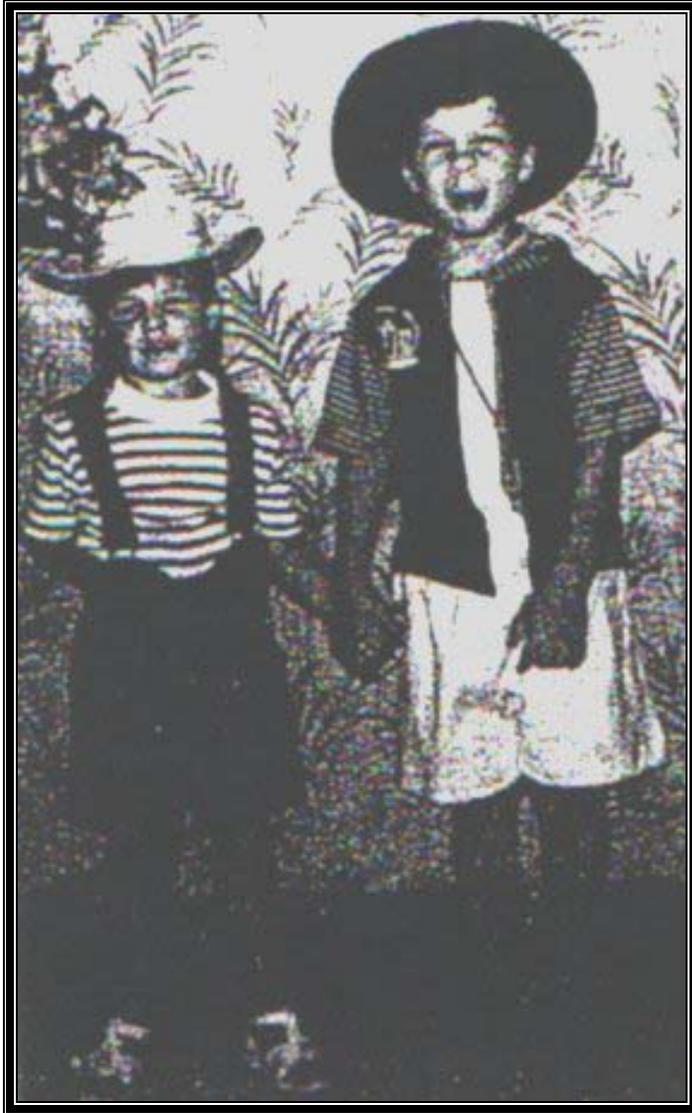
I imagine even just the police having to find out what they need to do their investigations, the whole aspect of being questioned and having to talk about it... may not be something that you want to do right at that moment. It must be very confronting, invasive. Moreover, I can only imagine how much worse it must be for those innocent people who are actually considered suspects and treated as such. I often think just how horrendous it must be, but I am not sure I get too much more specific about it. How do you get over something like that, especially if you have been at the scene at the time? I get a bit overwhelmed by the general idea of it as opposed to thinking much about specifics, I think.

Things that might change in my life...

Depending on who committed the murder, I might have extreme difficulties with trust or intimacy issues. It might impact on me forming relationships. I might think 'why me?' or 'why my loved one/s and not me?' I might feel guilty, to blame in some way for what happened or for not being able to prevent it. This would have to affect how I felt about myself and perhaps ultimately influence my interactions with others.

I could foresee a continual/ perpetual state of questioning, trying to make sense of it all. Trying to come to some resolution that would endure – some 'stillness' in the chaos. Does this kind of search ever come to rest? The energy it consumed might leave other areas of one's life neglected, unable to progress or grow. Avoidance of the issues could also produce a similar effect.

I imagine, or have a sense of, 'being forever alone' with this horrific event – especially if I was there, I don't know if there are any adequate supports for dealing with this. I imagine needs, support and, perceptions would change with time. Family and friends may feel helpless, powerless to assist each other. There is nothing they can do to take the pain away or alter the facts – make things better. Would this cause a greater degree of separation from each other – a sense that just at the time when you feel the need to be close you are actually further apart than ever?



Chapter 7

IN THE NAME OF LOVE

... the fight ended
For both there was victory
For both there was defeat
Through blood, we saw the caskets on the floor.
Our jewels were revealed
Her heart was in his
and his was in hers.

(The Marriage, uncertain of original source sent to me by Norm)

The events

I separated from my husband, after 5 years of marriage (an 8 yrs relationship in total). We had two children, a boy, and a girl, Kyle and Latisha, who were about 4 ½ and 2 ½ years, respectively, when we separated.

He had a great deal of difficulty accepting that the marriage was over and was quite distraught. I felt quite isolated through this period, let down by the fact that not very many people were prepared to believe the way he was behaving. Essentially, he had been stalking me. This culminated (after 18 months of separation) with him breaking into my house, on August 22 1994, when he shot and killed Kyle and Latisha while they were in the bed asleep beside me (I was ill so they had just jumped into bed with me). He also shot me in the leg and then committed suicide. So all of a sudden, I found myself alone in this completely new world.

I vividly remember the night, surreal as it is. I was taken to hospital and had my right leg amputated below the knee. The seriousness of the nature of my injuries meant I was in a tremendous amount of physical as well as emotional pain. Family came together and banded around to help me - all were shocked and had no idea what to do.

It had been a particularly bad time in Perth. There had been a child killed the night before by her mother - a young girl. There was also a lady murdered by her estranged partner on the Friday so Perth was pretty much in a state of shock

I remember how absolutely devastated my family was, how people told me that they had seen him being wheeled out of the house on the TV. That had a big impact on them. I was amazed at how insensitive it was to show that. I was also quite worried how that

might have impacted on his family. Later examination showed that it was actually me, being wheeled out of the house, but it did not negate the devastating effect on my family.

There was no communication between his family and I, however, there was communication with my father or the police. I was hidden in the hospital, put into a totally different ward, given an alias. That was for my well being because there were quite genuine concerns, and not necessarily from his family, but from the media and because of this degree of media attention.

I couldn't imagine how horrendous it would be to get a knock on the door and be told by a police person that your son had shot and killed his two children, himself and his wife. I just couldn't imagine how totally isolated his family might feel. I imagined they would have to be asking why, how come, what happened, and why was he even there? I had this sense that they had lost so much and yet they might feel judged by society, as being responsible and I didn't want that to happen. I didn't blame them in any way for what he had done.

I was very hurt that there was no sympathy card, there was no flowers, no death notices from them. I needed to tell them what happened, to know what the relationship was like - where it was at, and if they posed a threat to my safety? One of the most hurtful things that I learnt was that his family had actually asked for Kyle and Latisha's bodies. It felt to me that they had no acknowledgement of my role as their mother or that I was even still alive.

I could not even open the cupboard door, I had to have somebody with me continuously - my fears; my sense of security in the world had been totally shattered.

His funeral was six days after the event; I couldn't attend because of my health, but I had a bedside service at the same time. I was shocked to hear that there were photos of Kyle and Latisha on his coffin, and death notices that spoke of him as a loving father. It felt that his murderous actions were being ignored.

The hospital Chaplain was doing the kid's funeral service - a specialised grief counsellor - she was the first professional that I can remember actually asking *me* what *I* needed and felt. That was truly valuable. The coroner had released Kyle and Latisha's bodies, so their funeral was arranged for the Saturday (silence)... The Chaplain arranged a meeting with his parents before the funeral. I needed to tell them that I didn't hold them responsible,

to know where the relationship stood, and to answer their questions about that night, - they deserved that. The silences had been so hard to interpret... Ummm (silence)

The funeral, well you know.... funerals are funerals, yet it was the most beautiful celebration of their lives imaginable. The viewing and funeral is one area that I recall as really, really difficult and would advise people in similar situations to think about. Because there was Kyle *and* Tish for me to try to say goodbye to, time at the viewing was an issue. It was a really big factor - being told to hurry up so that other people could come in and say goodbye - how dare they say that to me, yet what could I do. Being restricted to a wheel chair, there were issues about the physical arrangement of viewing. The caskets were far too high for me to see Kyle and Latisha properly - nobody knew but I found that difficult... I could not even reach to give them a kiss goodbye.

Many of the people who were associated with him and his family didn't sign attendance cards. Death notices from his family and friends rarely mentioned my name, and very few people acknowledged that he was a lost person for me as well. (Silence). Within the public dialogue, there was no concept of duality, of his behaviours being totally unacceptable but that that did not make him all bad. I think that society thought that I would hate him through and through and that was it. I was very angry with him, hated his behaviour - what he did; but I will never hate him as a whole person. I felt sad for him - how sad and desperate - what sort of a place does one have to be in for this to be a solution?

It was easier for people on the peripheral to hate him than it was for me to, I didn't have that luxury - maybe that is why I empathise so much with his family because he is their son and they loved him and of course they will still love him. Nobody else in the world would miss Kyle, Latisha, and him as much as what they would, except my family and me. His family would not participate in the funeral procession. I understood - it must have been hard for them. I have never drawn a judgement on them - they cope the only way that they know how. I empathise that it must be bloody hard to know that your son or your brother did this.

The police investigation revealed that the murders were not spontaneous. He wasn't drunk, he wasn't drugged, under the influence of anything, and he had planned the whole thing, from way back in June. All of which was hard to comprehend. How do you plan to kill your children? It was so hard for me to make any sense of, or try to understand, you know? How do you look at your kids and think, well, I've got a gun in the next room.

He had told people he was going to kill me. Trying to understand why people wouldn't react to the things he was saying and the behaviour he was exhibiting was hard.

Practical help for me was a high priority. I had been living in a rental accommodation; there was rent and bills to pay. I had put aside the money from the property settlement, so I had a little bit of money towards the funerals and so forth. There were offers of financial support from family members; even a few strangers sent cheques in cards— that was nice it really helped me. (Silence) It was decided that I didn't want to go back in the house; anyway, it was too long before I could get out of hospital anyway. The entire house was packed up by friends and family and moved to my fathers'.

In amongst everything family were coming back and telling me the crime scene was different from how I remembered. I began to doubt and worry was my memory was actually accurate or not?

Many people (though it felt like everybody) ask me how I lost my leg. People are curious, but they have no idea how painful their questions are. The question 'what have you done to yourself' is emotive, as I did NOT do this to myself!

While often I wanted to talk about the murders, I remember how important it was (is) talking about the everyday things in life, things that are so normal - you don't realise how normal they are until your life is totally changed.

In mid to end October I got out of hospital. Still I was an outpatient nearly every day. The Chaplain continued to be a wonderful, fantastic, absolutely excellent support. While still in hospital, his family's solicitor had discovered that he and I were not divorced because of legal technicalities. I was therefore the sole beneficiary of his estate, not a huge amount, however it was certainly going to help, given the costs of burying three people, of moving, and not having any potential income for some time. I reluctantly decided that perhaps it was in my best interests to accept this money - many difficult situations arose out of this.

I had to engage a solicitor and a very long and drawn out process began. Eventually I managed to access his superannuation. His life insurance company, despite my being the sole beneficiary and the named beneficiary on the policy, actually concluded that, because I didn't take him for spousal maintenance, only for child support, and because Kyle and Latisha died approximately 60 seconds before he did, at his time of death, I was not

financially dependent on him. Therefore, I was not entitled to it and my lawyer had to fight that decision. It is about money for a life insurance company - not empathy or compassion.

Eventually they reluctantly agreed to pay the money, but, they wouldn't pay it directly to me, they paid it into his estate - an intestate estate (no will), where 50% tax applies. In order to have that tax reduced, I had to engage an accountant to apply to the taxation commissioner to have that amount reduced under extenuating circumstances. (Laughing) I don't know about extenuating, but I can tell you they were excruciating circumstances. Finally, I managed to get everything cleared up - that whole process took about two years.

So much was happening all at the same time (silence)... health - a prosthetic limb, learning to walk, sorting out a world that had suddenly become so different - that held nothing familiar. I described it as having gone to bed in a book that was full of characters that were active and noisy - activity on all of the pages - overflowing with hustle and bustle, then suddenly waking up on a blank page, no other characters, with no activity what so ever.

Living with my Dad (silence) was probably the only way that I got through. The prospect of having an empty house with no one in it, the fact that I *couldn't* live on my own, I *couldn't* even walk. It was different, strange yet the best that it could have been. It was difficult in the practical sense of being in a wheelchair, to do things, to cook, you know, to get the washing basket from the washing machine out to the clothesline, and pegging out washing on one leg. That was difficult, yet in some ways it added a degree of normality in my life.

I found it very difficult to be alone in the house, so I wanted to have security put on the house. I began to get quotes for security, simultaneously I was becoming aware of how difficult the process of accessing the life insurance, and Criminal Injuries Compensation (CIC) was.

When one of the security firms who had quoted, rang back to follow up, I explained the money I had been relying on in order to have this done was some time away. I told him of my circumstances and I clearly remember his generous response 'to offer to install security for me and I could pay when I got my money through'. I was so touched by the humanness, finally somebody had a heart, finally somebody – a total stranger- could

understand that it was really important for my sense of security, to do something tangible so nice and seemingly so easy. (Laughs)

Many people supported me, strangers had sent me cards in hospital, people from school, day care, the community of Stirling, (where it happened), rallied around sent flowers - not just initially, for probably 3 months - even after I got home. Everybody who showed their support did so in whatever way they could, that was so powerful for me - to negate some of the negativity and blame that had been in the media. Closer, my family, my sisters, my mum, my dad, my brothers, my aunts and uncles, were fantastic. My close friends, they were just wonderful. The hardest thing was that they didn't know what to do; they didn't know what to say and neither did I.

Some people hedged around the subject, many people didn't know. Some people avoided me. Support came from some unexpected people. The saddest thing for me was that, that only a very few people from his family, or from the town we had lived in, supported me. Not that I expected them to line up behind anybody; it was about the sadness of Kyle and Latisha and of him being dead; it didn't have to be about right and wrong, good and bad, rather lets acknowledge how sad it is - that was what I needed.

Changes

Most people never get to know how other people feel about you as a person, because those sorts of feelings are never usually expressed until somebody is dead. People wrote things to me that you would expect to be in the eulogy - a couple of people in particular, wrote very touching things that was really, really powerful - it gave me a sense of still having something to offer the world. Those positives from unexpected places were encouraging and important. Alternately there were people who I thought wouldn't judge me, that would be there for me, who have never been there for me since.

Very early, I needed to reassure people that it was ok. I felt quite responsible for that. (Silence). People were good enough to care about me, about Kyle and Latisha, the least I could do was to talk to them. The kids at school, I felt sad for them, how are they going to understand? At eight o'clock in the morning, right as all their schoolmates were getting in the car to school, the bloody radio stations announced the kid's names and the gory details. Some of these four and six-year-old kids were absolutely traumatised - terrified their fathers were going to come home and shoot them. Parents couldn't say that they died, create euphemisms or anything because it was so public. Kyle's best friend heard about it like that, at six years old. I get angry with him (the perpetrator) about that, how

could he hurt innocent kids? Did he know the impact of what *he* was doing, on all these little lives?

I still worry about the implications such early trauma may have on the kids in their adult lives. I really wanted these kids to have a sense of, of hope and some degree of faith in the world. All I could do to reassure these children - I was helpless to undo it. Trying to understand it was hard, a struggle, even as adults. Many of those kids still remember Kyle and Latisha - the questions that they ask now are different, they are still trying to make meaning of it, but at a different level. (Silence)

Searching

For the first eighteen months the more I searched for answers, talked to people, the more I dug, the more questions I came up with. I got to the point where I said I'm never going to know why, I've got to learn to accept that is what is. I don't have to be ok with it - just accept it. Trying to understand why something like this happens in your life is a futile exercise, impossible.

There is a whole process of reframing how you understand the world. As a kid, you're taught that $1 + 1 = 2$ and if you multiply it by three, you've got six. We are taught to believe in 'cause and effect' relationships. Homicide is a process of learning that there are certain things, that there is no identifiable cause and effect. The answers you have are *the* answers you have, - you need to look for more, but there is a point that you give up, where you're not going to find anymore. I realised that if I could understand what he did, if I knew how he felt, what he was thinking, I'd be just as capable of doing what he did. (Silence)

Absolved of Responsibility

Somewhere in that process, I received the death certificates for Kyle and Latisha; they just arrived in the post with no warning. Further, the section on 'cause of death' read, "Shotgun wound inflicted to 'x' [stated area of the body] deliberately inflicted by another person (unlawful homicide)"; never did it state whom by. Never in any of the legal records will it ever state 'Norm O'Neill murdered his son and daughter Kyle and Latisha.' That was one of the most hurtful things, because where in this equation, was responsibility to be placed on him, for his behaviour. That was hard to deal with.

Faceless social institutions

Not knowing how to apply for Criminal Injuries Compensation (CIC) I had been given the name of the, then, Shadow Minister for Health, Member for Fremantle, who was also a lawyer, which was extremely helpful with my criminal injuries claim. They spent a lot of time and energy guiding me writing it, then they got it all typed up for me. I am so grateful to them, even now.

CIC is unbelievably hard to access. It is advised that you get a lawyer, however, there is no legal aid available. Despite being there, and being injured, I still had to substantiate the effect of Kyle and Latisha's death. In WA, you have to have a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder to be able to get criminal injuries compensation. I was fortunate that I could rely on the Chaplain and the psychiatrist from the hospital who wrote my report free of charge.

One also needs to submit a Victim Impact Statement (VIS) probably one of the hardest things that I ever had to do - to write somebody you've never ever seen, 'A Criminal Injuries Compensation Assessor', (what a formal name to be writing to). To bare the very deepest wounds - the most vulnerable parts of your being, to somebody who is going to quantify, qualify, and calculate how much your loss is worth in dollars. To even think about some of the things (silence), let alone begin to write them, is indescribable. If you cut me open, took my insides out, laid them out on a table, and then told me my kidney was worth \$5.00 and my heart was worth \$10.00, my bowel was only worth 50c because it was pretty shitty (laughs). It feels like the most vital people in your life, become nothing more than a mathematical equation, that's an extremely traumatic thing.

At the same time as I was applying for CIC, it was time for me to leave Dad's. I was living in a rented place. I would stay at friend's places, or they'd come stay with me, - two years on, I still could not stay in a house on my own at nighttime. Dad had been my protector - what a tough job. I borrowed money from a dear friend to put security on this rented place; there were no grants available, or advances on CIC.

At the end of '97 (silence), in the post quite unexpected I got a letter from the criminal injuries compensation saying "your claim has been assessed, you have been awarded \$50 000.00 for the alleged crime". I quite vividly remember thinking, 'well fuck me, when is it going to be a real crime?' How many dead bodies do you need for it to be real? Because it has never been proven in a court of law, legally it's only alleged. How can we live in a world where there are three dead bodies, and it is alleged to be a crime? Things like that,

that lack of acknowledgement I found terribly hard, and acknowledgement of who was responsible. There were legalities, which saw that I could only claim one maximum amount; seeing this system as inhumane and unjust, I with the help of others made a big, but unsuccessful, effort to try and change that legislation for other people.

Acceptable conversations

Had I lost my leg in a car or motorbike accident it would be socially acceptable to discuss, as that is normal, expected. I can't say something that's expected, anticipated by people, there is this whole process of, if I say I was shot, and that's how I lost my leg, people ask who shot you? Why? My leg to me is nothing more than a representation of Kyle and Latisha being killed.

I feel I would not be making him take responsibility for his actions, not holding him accountable for what he did - if I lied and said an accident. It would be socially acceptable to talk about the fact that, I have two beautiful children, both of whom are dead, if they died of illness. It wouldn't alter my feelings of loss and sadness, my depth of grief, but it may allow a sense of its ok to talk about it.

Murder is most people's worst nightmare, therefore socially unacceptable to discuss. A murder, homicide, makes people vulnerable. If they know what's happened in my life, and they get close to me, see how 'normal' my life was, prior to this happening, they have to question how likely is it that they're going to have it happen in their lives? I feel that people are often unable to deal with how vulnerable we are as humans; how precious and tenuous life is; that people aren't always good; that they don't always find solutions that are healthy; and that people do kill each other. Ironically, I see that we can watch murder for entertainment value. There is a notion of a natural life cycle this cyclic way of the world - it's ok to talk about things that aren't within our control, cancer cells, cyclones or tornado's, there's no sense of helplessness or failure. (Silence)

Continuing in a new World

Though not unique to me, one factor that impacted on me is that (silence) the murder of Kyle and Latisha was the end of a series of violations, not just one violation. I have become acutely aware that my trust was violated several times. Therefore, trust is a huge issue for me.

In my way of thinking, if I continue on in life sending my children, a very clear and concise message, that life *is* valuable and that as individuals, we are worthy of living and

having fun and its not always easy, but it is possible. If I was to sink - commit suicide- what message am I sending Kyle and Latisha, wherever they are, I don't believe it would be the right message - it wouldn't be consistent with the messages that I tried to give them while they were alive, so why should I change that now that they're dead?

The whole word 'positive' has a connotation. If you're not grieving, obviously and outwardly, did you really love them? If I'm seen to cope well, I feel people might put me on a pedestal; in some ways, I actually feel that could replicate the obsessive behaviour that he had toward me. I have an underlying struggle... if I am seen as strong all the time, where in that is space for me to not be strong?

Six years on, it feels like there's an expectation, I'll be dealing with it better, if I try to say, I'm not, people's sense of helplessness seems to increase. They want to be able to make it go away and because their sense of frustration is escalating, simultaneously they often minimise the messages you give about your pain. There are so many ways to define what coping should look like. The word positive triggers off this whole thing about coping, I don't want you to say I'm coping because if you do, it means you're may not hear me when I ask for help, yet I want you to recognise that for the greater part I do well with my struggles.

Remembering

It is nice to remember the good things; there is a fear of forgetting the happy things. However, there are certain things I am very happy to forget. The flashbacks, (for a long time I could only sleep about an hour a night), having traumatic images reduce in intensity and frequency. This took a long time – about four years, but it was really important. It is very - particularly hard in some senses, because I know the damage that was done to their little bodies. Remembering how they were when they were happy was initially difficult, but it is easier now.

It doesn't get easier with time, but you get better at dealing with what comes out of left field. I imagine I have a whole set of sporting equipment, a tennis racquet, a squash racquet, a badminton racquet, etc and I got good at identifying what was coming. Nowadays it might get to within a couple of inches of my face give me a hell of a shock, but I usually manage, minimise the impact. It takes a long time - there are times it does not work.

People often talk about murder – yet nowhere publicly is there a place or a space where the beauty and the vitality of those lost lives can be acknowledged. Not in the media or the criminal justice system.

I want the world to remember, not necessarily, what they looked like or the sorts of things they enjoyed, but just to know and acknowledge that there are many beautiful, wonderful people deprived of life, by the actions of another human. There is a grief that the world will never have the opportunity to know Kyle and Latisha's beauty

I think that is part of why I feel annoyance when people won't talk about Kyle and Latisha. In not talking about Kyle and Latisha as real and tangible - having existed, people are actually denying a whole part of my identity - me. (Silence)

New directions

Of course, my current outward identity is nothing like I imagined. I certainly did not foresee myself being alone, living alone, not having a sense of immediate family, being a widow and an inactive mother, at the age of 24. I never anticipated the man I chose to marry would do this to my world through deliberate actions. My career and focus in life would not have been on secondary homicide victims, had I not experienced this loss and realised that there is so little written that says it's normal to feel this or that, it is normal to feel like you've got two heads, like the word murder is tattooed on you're forehead.



Chapter 6

AS THE YEARS GO BY...

Some of the hardest conflicts in life are not with other people,
But are very often found deep within ourselves...

(Nathan, original source unknown)

Me

My name is Nathan, I am 24 years of age, and I currently work as a factory assistant. I have a twin brother.

The events

My first and clearest memory is when me and my brother went over to Gran's to stay the night, the weekend, like we usually did – gave Mum a bit of a bit of break. We loved going over to Gran's. As Mum was taking us to Gran's she bought us ice cream. I don't know whether Raye [my older sister - Raylene] bought it or Mum but that is my last memory. Then waking up in the morning with all the family out there and I wanted a glass of water. Instead of Gran coming in, my Uncle came in, and said "your Gran's not here."

I walked out, and there were a few other family members there as well. I went back to sleep and when I woke up, more family members came over, and I started to wonder what the hell was going on. I can't remember who told us about it - what family member. But me and my brother were sat down in the lounge room - a lot of family there - and we were told honestly, but also in a very subtle way, what happened. I remember the honesty - it actually kicked in; we understood at that age what happened. I was about seven, I don't know the exact age. I haven't really got a good chronicle memory for dates. Me and my brother were crying, and everyone else was crying... I just kept on rambling on, I don't know what about.

We were told that Raylene was no longer with us, and that was made very clear. We weren't given the full details as to the rape or the specifics of how it happened. We were told that she died very peacefully, in her sleep, no pain. That meant a lot you know... (Quaver in voice, silence.) It was unbelievable, but I knew the gravity of the situation, with all the family members around crying. I can't remember specifically if we were told,

that she was murdered or... I remember being told she died in her sleep, and she had died without pain or suffering (sigh). I remember being told someone broke into our house and that Mum was being taken care of. She was not in a very, you know, well state, as you could imagine. Raylene was 14, nearly 15.

Changes

I remember a lot of fucken rage, a lot of anger, for me. The first sensation was of absolute grief. 'Til rage and hatred took over, and it's stayed with me ever since I 'spose. Never lost that and I don't think I ever will. I remember being a lot more angry than my brother. A lot more umm screwed up... I was angry at whatever took my sister away from me (large sigh, silence)

My whole lifestyle changed. Initially family members were around all the time. Family members were having hot discussions about the best thing to do, what not to do, it's a very critical time. I don't think Mum really had any control over a lot of the events. Our family members made decisions as they felt best or appropriate. Our family looked after us. They were there when we needed them. But a lot of our family members did not know what to say.

There was a lot of anger, a lot of crying - a lot of rage (large sigh). I remember my Uncle sitting us down afterwards and talking to us, he said if he could trade places with my sister he would. He mentioned something like 'he will be taken care of this bloody bastard'. I remember feeling so happy for that... you know when you're a kid and adults says he's gonna hurt the bad guy. It made me feel happy. At that tender age, revenge meant something to me. It shouldn't really enter a kids mind at that age, you know, blood lust, wanting to fucken commit... at an age like that - diabolical thoughts. It was pretty heavy shit. The rage took over after a while... Before that, I was a normal little kid. I got along with my sister, we used to have some fights and what not, but there were some times we were the little brats and but all that doesn't matter, because we were just a completely normal family. (Silence)

I remember thinking that if I could just spend a couple of minutes with her, and just even say goodbye, that can mean a hell of a fucken lot, when you're a kid. I used have these dreams that she'd come to me and we'd talk. I think those dreams were completely normal. The minds way of sorting out things it wanted to say, sorting out little bits and pieces that you couldn't really hope to do in reality. (Sigh, silence.)

People became a lot more hesitant to talk. The kids did not understand at school. Kids wouldn't understand what happened. They'd come up and go 'oh wow I heard your sister got killed'. I did get into a few little scruffs in primary school over that but...

A lot of my memories of childhood after Raye died are really sketchy... Family tried to keep me and my brother occupied, take our thoughts away from what had happened. When you're a kid, you place all that trust and faith in adults, that they know what's best. It's only as you get older that you realise adults are probably more fucked up than the kids. (Giggles.) Shit, I placed all my trust and faith in adults' love. (Giggle).

My perception of reality changed; the grim fact that life can be taken away. The boogiemán took on a new meaning. I remember sleeping with knives under my pillow; I had this little morbid fascination about knives, keeping knives. At one stage, I had about three knives under my pillow, which mum took away from me. The knives were more of a good luck charm than anything else. The boogie man took on a human form instead of a umm yeh... Your whole perception of reality changes.

Knowing what to say or what to do

At that stage, Gran became very protective of me and my brother. She thought she knew what was better for us than what my Mum thought, so she became a very big influence in our lives from that day forth. She took over. I remember arguments all the time between my Mother and my Grandmother. Family members thought my Gran knew what was best for us, which in a lot of ways she did, but in a lot of ways, she really didn't. She tried to drive us away from Mum; in an emotional sense, she tried to take over as the parent figure. There were stages when Mum went through 'hell' depression, which is very natural. I think my Grandmother presumed that she was not a fit parent. Me and my Mum often talk about my grandmother. Looking back, I can see Gran was very loving but sometimes she was manipulative.

My relationship with my Mum (probably) grew apart. You know even to this day we are not really that close, but we do get along – well we try to. It's just one of those things that happen. Unfortunately, family members will either *grow and come together* after a crisis situation *or* they will *fall apart*. Sometimes you don't have control over relationships between family members, they just happen, and there is no real reason for it, you can't pin point it.

Mum always did what she thought was best for us kids, and she done a bloody good job. Nobody in their right mind could deny that she took very good care of us kids. There will always be happy memories of that little home with all three of us in. She had all the stresses of a normal single parent. Trying to work, trying to struggle, always a bit stressed out coping with all three of us kids – she had a hell of a thing to do, so... That was a happy little home - I remember that...

I was lonely, my sister she was wonderful, always used to talk chat to me. I used to be able to tell her things that I couldn't tell my brother. I looked up to her 'cause she was older and had cool groovy friends - I remember that time. Also, the attention we used to get from Raye and all of her friends when they would come over. You know, cute little kids (laugh) probably attention seekers. (Long silence). I remember for a while we couldn't even go out in the back yard without being supervised. I think that was a natural defence mechanism kicking in, Mum had already one lost one kid and didn't want to lose anymore.

I pushed a lot of my feelings aside. I remember going to the funeral and seeing Raylene in the casket. I felt very guilty as a kid, because my initial reaction was to giggle, I did not think this person lying in the casket was my sister. I thought it was a plastic figure or something. (Large sigh) I tried to escape a lot of it by denying a lot of things. Self-denial, used to come and go, there used to be times when the full force of everything would hit me, and there would be times when I would just push it away.

I don't know if it was Mum or the family members who tried to put a religious influence in our lives, trying to help out. We started attending group things as kids and I remember going to church and saying I hate this, I don't belong here; with these, you know, religious freaks (giggle). I have always hated religion; it serves no purpose in my life whatsoever. I do have a spiritual side but it is not religious. I don't know what has happened to my sister now, and eventually what will happen to all of us where we go and what the grand destiny of things is. I like to believe that there is something, as to what it is, none of us can be really fucken sure until we get there.

Before Raylene died, I had my own beliefs - as much as a kid can. The strongest belief and structure in a kid's life is the adults. They control the world when you are a child; I think that is a structural belief. I started thinking more about spirituality, and what happens when a person dies after Raylene's death. I accepted the fate of other people's mortality but I remember that I got to a stage when I was about fourteen or fifteen, I

became very morbidly depressed about my fate and my own mortality, I had never faced that before. I'd always been able to face other people's mortalities, it is a very major thing in ways, but it's natural, it happens to all of us. When it happens very early in people's lives and very tragically, I see the unfairness of the world; nothing pisses me off more than hearing about little kids on the news that have died in accidents. I believe that is unfair and unjust.

It hits especially hard when you hear about, you know, girls the same age as my sister dying in tragic circumstances, being murdered and raped. It makes me want to get a fucken shot gun and blow away these bloody animals, vultures. We all make mistakes in our lives but I think a mistake like that is **non negotiable**. By doing something like that, you are no longer fit to be classified as a human being. To this day rape is the ultimate invasion of privacy, whether it be a little girl or an eighty seven year old Grandmother (like what happened recently), I mean it is fucken disgusting.

A big taboo

I remember growing up thinking that sex was a horrible thing; it used to be something that was evil. Of course when you become a teenager you think otherwise don't you, but... (Huhu.) I remember that being, still is a great influence. You know – “rapist” to say the word is fucken more horrible than any other swear word. It even sounds disgusting. It really triggers of bad memories when I hear about girls being raped at a tender age or being molested and then killed. People that do it are not human beings they are not fit to be called or even be associated with the human race. I have heard, and known some people to do some horrible things, - people I have been associated with throughout life - and it starts to worry me that these are the people I hate. I find it very, very hard to get along with people like that if they have done something very, very demeaning to another human being.

I guess I am older now, I realise the implications of my sister being murdered then raped. That's just fucken horrible, to take a little child like that and to turn it into a sexual object is fucken is absolutely repulsive. I mean sure I look at a 16 or 17 year old girl I think she'd be very stunning as she gets older, but I don't turn around and you know, its bizarre, I don't understand it you know... (Silence)

When I was about 18 or 19, me and my ex girlfriend went into Alexander library she was very interested to learn what happened to my sister. I think it is natural. We both scrolled through every single newspaper event. For me it brought back all the memories and what

not. I will talk about it freely to anyone who is not going to be smart arsed or bullshit about it. If they are going to sit down and listen as a human being, one human being to another, I will talk.

The murder impacted on my views of people from other cultures, as the perpetrator was from a different cultural background. I became very suspicious of all people from that cultural background. It, sort of, fed all the stereotypes.

It was a great sense of relief to us kids when the perpetrator was apprehended a few days later. The cops, they caught the bad guy. I remember it being all over the news. It was a bit weird I didn't get the sensation as a kid, of like being into a movie star or something. It was hard to have primary school friends come up and ask questions and questions and questions... After a while, you get a bit sick and tired of answering them and you just want to thump the shit out of a few people.

I just wanted to be left alone to deal with it in my own little way. I had a hard time dealing with things, and teachers and kids would give me advice. The whole attitude I had was 'hey screw you; I don't want your fucken advice. Fuck your advice - who gives a shit, it means nothing to me.' Most advise is a load of bullshit, because you don't know how you'd cope in a situation until you have actually been through it.

The sentence, I remember going to the preliminary, I think it was. That got me a little bit more interested in what would happen to him. Just knowing he was going to go to jail. People in my family were telling me that he would suffer. Which I don't think he has done to a very good extent. He has not been made to suffer enough. Keeping someone like that in jail and the burden on the taxpayer is just a waste of money. I always say to myself give myself half an hour alone with him; I'd show him the true meaning of suffering... absolute true meaning of suffering. Not this being incarcerated, that's nothing...

He is due to be up for parole in 2006 (I think). I believe other states are still attempting to have him extradited for other charges. This person is a repeat offender for crimes against humanity. He's a fucken animal. He's just going to do it again and again and again. Throughout his early manhood, he's been in a cycle of bashing women up and girls and robbing and having no regard for human life - no regard for human feelings. If he is released, again I fear he will do it again and I would not like to see that happen.

Making sense of it as an adult

I realise now, growing up, that the world is a very violent place, yet it can be a very beautiful place. As an adult, you have to accept these things will happen in life, that there is no way to 100% prevent this. You can put guidelines in place, try to restrict the movements of these people but it will never be controlled 100%. There comes a time where you have to accept part of humanity, part of society, is the violence and the loss of life that goes with it. You can't really make sense of it. You just accept it on a very superficial level. I can never really truly accept that my sister is gone, this fucken wanker took her life and done all horrible sorts of things to her. But in a superficial sense, I have to say to myself that she died and do your best in life. Anyone who's ever lost someone accepts it on a superficial basis but I think on a deep level we can never truly accept fate and very tragic circumstances.

Raye would be happy if I have a happy life. Hopefully one day we all meet again, and get to say and do things that we wanted to do. It is important to believe in yourself, as hard as that can be at times. Having a physical defect, being deaf, sometimes it's a bit harder for me to cope with. In a lot of ways, something like that happening makes you a lot stronger but also makes you weaker. It definitely has an impact on life.

The struggles

I went through life as a kid fearing to truly love anyone. I think my sister dying - and I had a lot of friends die when I was a teenager. I found it hard to really get close to anyone. I perceive myself to be slightly abnormal - I think a lot people would read that and say completely abnormal - because **I** can accept the harsh realities of life. People can never understand your pain, your suffering. You can talk to people about it but I don't think you can ever get people to completely understand unless they have been through something like that themselves...

It was very hard for me when I had my first girlfriend, actually to... I mean that's a wonderful thing in life - it's a blissful moment. It made things a lot harder to actually begin with to I did not know how to react with a lot of things. In a lot of ways, something like a rape will retard a lot of emotions and feelings.

Because of what happened to my sister, I grew up believing sex was a horrible thing, facing my own sexuality and learning to accept that it is something that is a wonderful truly happy thing was difficult. Having my first girlfriend meant having to overcome

barriers to “fears” to realise that. Understanding that it is only when sex is completely taken and put into another context that it’s a disgusting horrible “thing”.

The legal processes

The system, the criminal justice system, is protecting the criminals more than it is the victims. Every criminal has their rights, things do come into factor, but I don’t believe that the sentences are harsh enough. I do believe in capital punishment, but only with the most serious heinous crimes. I do believe that - for repeat offenders, crimes against humanity.

By crimes against humanity I mean, crimes against a person whether it is physically, emotionally, or sexually. Disregard for others at the most diabolical level. Treating people like your own personal toys of satisfaction and joy, to take someone’s life, or to rape or to molest, without any thoughts for repercussions or consequence to the victims. Repeat offenders of crimes against humanity should be shot through the bloody head. Unfortunately, that’s my personal feelings.

How hard is to look at someone’s record, and see molestation, rape and to hand out light sentence, knowing very well that they are going to do it again. I hope these judges can live with themselves. I know that they are following the guidelines of the system. They can only hand out certain sentences to, what needs to be in place is a whole review of the whole legal process.

It is important to...

Have your family and friends around. Keep on talking, keep on talking and try to believe that in a sense things do get a little bit easier as time goes along. It’s like a wound that will never fully heal, but it will become less painful. With family and friends just about anything can be overcome. You just need non-judgemental support. I think a lot of people judged my mother as a stereotypical single mother, ‘white trash.’ In little ways, I felt judged as a young boy. Teachers would say go easy on this kid he’s had, you know... I didn’t want that. I would have preferred that if I was feeling upset or whatever, them turning around and saying well just leave him be. Not for them to alienate me, to an extent where, I felt out cast and different from everyone else.

You get this sensation, questions of why, why, why, why? There is no reason for it, bad things happen to good people and that’s all there is to it. Time and family and friends can heal a lot in life, you never get to the point where you will feel no pain. Its good that we

never completely recover in a sense because we will remember our loved ones throughout life and we can probably use that as a guiding point, a focus in our own lives to make us better human beings. It is really important when it comes to tragedy to have a focus on the positive side to life, that way you will overcome a lot of things.

The legacy

Believe me things *will* keep coming up - fifteen years on there are issues arising from the events. There is a thing; people are talking about - 'restorative justice'. A process involving victims meeting with perpetrators and telling them the impact the crime has had on their lives. Some members of my family think it could be a good thing. I have concerns that it would further harm them. What happens if the perpetrator says things that upset them? What happens if the perpetrator only does it for parole reasons? What happens if there is no remorse for the crime? There are so many questions in my mind. Why not let sleeping dogs lie?

In cases where young kids that are the perpetrators, who haven't put into place their moral standards, to meet up with victims of house break-ins and bashings, it could help them to realise the full impact of what they have done. But when dealing with a serious friggen monster who murders and rapes, I have serious concerns about the potential of a serious negative impact. It does have its place but I think that people need to be aware of the full implications of doing something like that.

Questions and Answers

I don't know if people are born evil or whether there are influences in life that mould them, but no-one's got all the answers, I've got a lot of questions, but not enough answers unfortunately...

The one thing I know is that it is the wonderful things in life that have a huge impact. As I was growing up our family and my Mum had this thing about making us kids enjoy life. In a way, some times you felt like you are a bit selfish - you know enjoying life - but as I said you realise how life goes on. People who have gone would want you to enjoy your life. In the grand scheme of things, we will meet one day, and my little personal belief is that things will be completely happy. I think that is one of the things that helped me get through life is realising there is so much good in the world - so much beauty. I mean we just try to do our best and keep ourselves happy and keep those around us happy, as hard as it is sometimes.



Chapter 7

“OUR DISTANT STAR”

You're my not so distant star
I look up every night
And see you're not so far away...

(Gina Jefferys & David Bate, 1994, 'Distant Star' on *The flame*, ABC, Australia.)

The events...

Well, I'll start at the beginningon Sundays, certain Sundays probably once a month Jane, our brother, Mum, Dad and I or whoever was in Perth would get together and have lunch. (Pause) I went there Sunday, June the 9th 1996. Mum, Dad and I (I don't know where my brother was, he never showed up) were waiting, waiting, waiting, for Jane to ring us or like come for lunch - she was supposed to be coming, but she never did...

When I left, I said "oh, you know, she's probably just hung over, or at some guy's house, or whatever, like usual" and I said to Mum "ring me when she rings you Mum." She said, "I said everything will be ok." So, I went home about 5 o'clock and then never heard from Mum. I rang her up about eight o'clock (pm), and asked, "Have you heard from Jane," she said, "No, your father's over at the flat at the moment, so I'll ring you back." She rang me back about 9 o'clock and said, "No, Jane didn't come home and blah, blah, blah." Then we started getting worried, so on Monday when she didn't show up at work, I think that's when they rang the police and it all started from there.

That night, I just thought maybe she's having a drama with one of her boyfriends, or one of her friends, or she's gone somewhere, or... I only thought that for about a week, and then I started getting worried. My brother and I thought we'd know if something was wrong, if something had happened to her, because we're close to her. Probably for 3 or 4 days, after it got into the papers, I was you know drinking, and smoking or whatever, anyway so, yeh, it was just pretty unreal.

It took a couple of days to get in the papers. I think it was in the paper on the Tuesday, cause Mum and Dad called the police on the Monday. I think within a couple of days they thought that it was a Claremont serial killing, but they didn't want to speculate but

they suggested that it might be. [Right] Nevertheless, you know, they didn't want to say that and upset the family or anything like that, not that they hadn't already.

The police thought that it was a serial killing, as Jane, 24; was the second girl to go missing. Another one went missing, a year and a half before Jane. There were other girls that had gone missing, but not from the same background. Working class or poor, so no one seemed to really give a shit about people like that, - they did not attract people's interest. The police confirmed that it was a suspected serial killing when they found Jane's body at Wellard about six weeks after she went missing.

Those six weeks...

Those six weeks were pretty horrific but I had lots of friends and family around, that was good. My brother, cousin and I went out a couple of weeks after she went missing and photocopied thousands and thousands of posters, and about 20 people, all our friends, put them up all over Perth metro area. We put them up at all the pubs we drank at, at the OBH and the Conti and the Wembley Hotel and places like that.

A couple of days after she went missing the police had us watch a video of the Conti, (a hotel in Claremont) of the people outside and inside. I could see Jane, going up the stairs, down stairs, mingling with the crowd. The camera only went around every 3 minutes. Then after the pub closed, or near closing, Jane was out the front and she looked like she was looking for someone, she was looking at her watch - looking around - that lasted for a few minutes and then the camera turned around and she wasn't there, so she's obviously walked somewhere or been picked up by someone. (Long pause).

I didn't recognise anyone out of the ordinary or suspicious, or anything like that. The camera's are still in Claremont, to this day. Every time I go there, I'm, you know... (looking from side to side as if looking for something). We always went to Claremont as kids as it was always one of the safest places, I always felt really safe there. Claremont oval is there, we always go to the footy there, and it's just really weird. I don't think people find it safe down there now, I mean, maybe some people, you know, but there will always be that in the back of their mind, you know...

It's just weird. I always said to Dad before I left home, if anyone ever did anything to any of my family, I'd kill them, well I might if I knew who it was (laughter) or I might think about it. I mean, I did feel like that but I don't feel like that anymore but I did feel like

that, for the first couple of years but there's been lots of other things happen since then so...

It's just 4 years; in June, we always take it from when she went missing, not from when her body was found. The little plaque at Karakatta, the cemetery, has got June 9th on it, that's the day, the last day we saw her. Dad goes there every Sunday and puts flowers out- I planted a little tree, now its really good... She is in a special little garden bed and they've got nice rain foresty stuff. I've gone there a few times, and I do go there occasionally and have a Strawberry Champagne with her (laughter)... pour it over the bloody thing, I don't think she's there. I think that she's everywhere, I mean she's with me when I am upset, or Mum or... yep... Dad goes there every week no matter what; it was hard on Sunday cause it was Father's day. (Long pause).

It will be good when my brother and his wife move back from down South. They'll be moving to Perth in a couple of weeks. That'll be good because Mum & Dad get to see their grandchildren and them. Nan thinks its great cause she'll get to see them too; it'll be good for everyone.

Family Changes

I expected our family to get closer after Jane died. You know, grief would bring us closer together and that we would appreciate each other more, despite our differences. I told Mum and Dad about my sexuality when I was 17, so it's been 17 years. At times it feels like we've drifted further apart.

Things change...

Jane used to do all the girly things with Mum, like go shopping with her, buy make-up together. Go to the same pubs, talk about the same bloody boys – but I don't get into it. Therefore, Mum has had that taken away from her. I said “well I can still come and do them with you Mum,” I'll ring up and say “do you want to go to the movies, or something.

Making sense of it all

(Voice quavering) I try to do the same things I've always done, that's what Jane would want me to, and not feel sorry for myself, cause depression, she wouldn't want that. I had my cards read. I've never believed in any of that crap. Then the psychic said “you won't believe this but Jane said that she's already told you for years that you have to cut your fingernails, cut your toenails and not rip them off.” (Laughter) I went “right” but

there is no way that the psychic could have known that for many years Jane would go “oh will you get the bloody scissors sis, I’m sick of you sitting there ripping your toenails.” (Laughter.) When I heard that, and a couple of other things, she used to say, then I knew that she was all right. I realized that there was something after dying besides blackness, which is what I used to think.

Friends have been good, I had been drinking every single day for 15 years before Jane died, (laughter) that’s probably one good thing that she’s done for me ‘cause now I can’t even get pissed ‘cause like, I get depressed, suicidal sometimes. (Laughter). Sometimes when I drink, I want to go and be with her or whatever- be melodramatic. I haven’t really changed, oh, I suppose I have changed a bit, but I don’t feel like I’ve changed that much - probably better for all concerned that I don’t drink that much anymore anyway, seeing as I have got a mouth (laughter).

Re-Evaluating and Rethinking ...

The way I treated my body, and knowing that tomorrow I could be dead - just like you could be, because things like that do happen (laughter). I suppose I do more, and learn more. Enjoy the beautiful things in life cause you never know when your times up. I try to find the positive things every day - I do have my days.

I haven’t got many of the friends that I had before. Most of them are still leading the same lifestyle that I used to. Now that I am in a steady relationship, I have more faith, my partner has been really supportive, and I want to go out and do more. I’ve got new friends, people that are in better spaces and I need to be around those kind of people, if I was around the other kind of people then I’d be a mess (laugh), like in Graylands or something. So I mean life has changed and I’ve had lots more to do with supportive people. I still have contact every week with one of my best mates that I’ve had for 17 years. She’s been really good cause Jane and her were good friends. Even a couple of my ex-girlfriends have been supportive.

By support, I mean open, but they’re not always talking about it. Just supporting me in whatever I’m doing in everyday life, and they ring me up and say do you want to do this or whatever (pause). Even my relatives, not my immediate family, my cousins they’ve been really supportive. I probably wouldn’t have got my job at a deli. They’re my family, they knew that I needed the job (laugh) and needed money. I was still at TAFE when it happened, just about to go into exams. I had to ask all my lecturers “can you give me the

marks for the practicum's and I'll do the exams in the next semester?" It was good 'cause they were supportive, I got a very nice card from them.

There have been good things come out of this. I wouldn't have gone to this self-awareness group that I went to for a while. There were good things about it, but I stopped going as, the woman leading it, was hypocritical, not what I would call spiritually enlightened (laugh). She once said, "Jane must have, she invited it into her life," which was like saying, you know, that it was her destiny or something. I mean like shit, (laughter) I mean that's how some people are...

One of the positives I have found in all this, was in 1996 when I helped organise Perth's part of the International Women's March, 'Reclaim The Night,' held in Claremont. It was the biggest Perth 'Reclaim the Night' crowd ever, over 2000 people. I think it is good to raise people's awareness; but tragic things shouldn't have to happen first.

I was going to TAFE when Jane was missing and her posters were up on the buses. I heard some young boys say 'yeah well she fucking deserved it' or 'what do you expect if you looked like that' or you know things like that. They didn't know I was her sister, obviously. I just felt like grabbing them and putting them through the window (laugh) of the bus. Things like that after a few years you just go, yeah whatever; that's other people's crap so I try not to take it on

Not expecting this sort of thing to happen...

No one ever thinks that it's going to happen to 'them'. I mean, sometimes, sometimes when I wake up I still can't believe it. I think I will see Jane walk through the door, or see her down the street. A couple of times I think I have seen her but, (large pause) you know... When it does happen to you, you think anything is possible any day to anyone, so it makes you feel like your not bullet proof. [Invincible?] Yeah, that's what Jane always thought she was. I mean I'm sure she never thought anything was going to ever happen to her, I mean otherwise, you know... (Pause)

Still there are lots of people that never worry about any of that stuff. You still see lots of people out late at nights on the streets and stuff like that but I mean you know people have a right to do that. I know they have a right to do that. But it doesn't seem like it's a real right, like people do have a right to walk the streets, whenever they want, whatever they wear, blah, blah, blah. When it comes down to reality, you can't really, as we've seen in the past. I don't know of many cases of males, unless they're homosexual, being beaten

up or murdered just from walking around the streets and talking to people, wearing brief clothing, or stuff like that. It makes you wonder what reality is doesn't it?

I mean like, Claremont, if you go to there on any given weekend, it did die down for a while after every... 'Cause there have been three girls go missing, after that, there was a period probably about 6 or 8 months that it was really quiet. Now it seems to have livened up again - everyone has put it to the back of their minds. I think it's good in some ways. Then it concerns me in a lot of ways, 'cause I don't want it to happen again. I don't know, I think that there's got to be more education and less fascism. You can't just tighten the laws, and say to people 'oh you can't do this, or you can't go out late at night, or you can't do this.' You have got to start educating people to, you know, I don't know... Seems to be like, there's less respect, and less, people with less morals, you know as the world goes further into the new millennium, whereas it should be the other way if we think we're so good, you know intelligent.

When it happens again...

Well it was devastating when the third girl disappeared. The first girl and Jane, they were really young, 18, and 24 respectively. But this woman, she was 27 - 28, more mature, wasn't intoxicated, well that's what the paper said anyway. You don't know, do you, but didn't appear to be intoxicated, was worldly - just come back from Ireland. I just thought, before that, it was because they were young and intoxicated, and it might not have happened if that was not the case. But, the third girl, she was more mature, less intoxicated and it still happened so...yeah... then that made me think, well fucking hell!!!

They reckon the first two looked alike. I didn't really. Then the third girl was totally different, taller, with dark hair and more worldly and you know, doesn't seem, I don't know, I don't know if it's the same person maybe, well maybe it's just a copycat or something. I hope I know before I die (laugh).

I've stopped reading the paper, you know, sometimes, obviously you see the front page but whenever I read the paper now. I only read the sport section because I don't want to know about the rest. I'm sure someone will tell me if anything significant happens, not just crap all the time. The media keep rehashing it, rehashing it, oh a set of clues, oh a set of clues and it's just crap, you know like bringing it up all the time without having significant evidence, you know like...

Do you realize when...

One of the really terrible things that's happened since that, was with one of my family members that I was very close to. She and Jane never got on. The day that Jane's body was found, I rang, because she was like close to me. I told her that they found the body and she something awful, I haven't spoken to her from that day on. It's really hard because family members helped me photocopy all the pictures and take them around and shit like that. That's been hard. That is the last thing I ever thought I'd ever hear from her. I know they didn't get on but you don't have to take shit like that. I miss out on a relationship with her daughter, I don't get to see her. It's been really weird. I've become closer to some people and then some people I haven't, you know.

What's important...

Formal things, like death certificates, and police haven't been important to me. I'd rather remember her the way that I remember. I know the police go over to Mum's and have cuppa's with her, every few weeks and update her - see how she is. She just tells me, and I go 'yeah whatever, just tell me if there's ever anything interesting.' (Long pause.)

What was important to me was her ashes. I had this dream that I was on Cottesloe, which is our favourite beach. We used to go there all the time, I was on the jetty, I had half the ashes, and I threw them out for Jane; so that she could be with the dolphins - and cause she liked Cottesloe. That would have been great if it happened in reality. You know (laughter). It's just a ritual thing. What I did instead was I wrote a letter to her and then I went and sent it, into the ocean. [Ohm, that was nice...] Yep, (pause)...

I only had one sister, whenever I'm buying birthday cards or I'm looking for a card and I find something that says to me dear sister or whatever I find that really)

I try to think about all the good times. The things that she said about life, she was a happy-go-lucky, freethinking, respectful, a good person really. I try and think of ways that I can improve myself. Jane was always improving herself, learning new things about different cultures, stuff like that. I like to have a drink with her now and again, play some of her favourite music, just things like that I suppose.



Chapter 8

I AM ONLY HERE FOR THIS MOMENT.

When all of this music sounds like you know what you want to say, then it will have been of all worth, ever. You will be something complete unto yourself, present and unique.

(25/8/96 Handwritten on inside cover of Jeff Buckley's, Sketches For My Sweetheart The Drunk – album, <http://members.tripod.com/~captaintab/sketchwords.txt>)

The events

When Chantelle was killed, (sigh) I always go back even now to the very first night, that you always dreaded that knock on the door. You see that add on the TV with the policeman, and we knew before they even uttered her name, that it was her, and oh just the... the horrible shock and what it does to you system, your mind, its really quite horrific, you just can not imagine it. From that day on your life changes forever.

All the different aspects of grief your family goes through. My husband used to, and still does at times, sit outside and just stare into space, or hang his head, and I'd just know the pain he was in. He'd never, and still doesn't talk about Chantelle; it seems he didn't want to talk about her. Although for me, I just had to keep talking about her. I couldn't cope unless I could talk about her all the time. She was such a great part of our family life. Whenever she was around, there was so much noise, giggles, and laughter that we'd almost be glad to see her go back to Perth for some peace. Especially when she and her eldest brother were together, they were both very similar in nature. Sadly, now that has all gone. We have all lost the bubble that was in our family. Everyone who knew Chantelle said she had personality. I have said a hundred times, we've got the memories, we can remember, but it's what we don't have, what's been taken away from you – you feel cheated.

You look back and think something as innocent as hopping on the back of the ute, like she did; she would have been having fun. Someone else's stupidity wrecked our life. As hard as you try to be positive, some days you can't get a positive out of it. (Sigh, sniffles)

As I said the effect it has on the family, our youngest daughter, who was not quite sixteen at the time, we had never fought. Yet, for two years we have done nothing but fight. She found it easier to move out of home. We found that hard to deal with. If Chantelle hadn't of been killed it wouldn't have happened. Our other son shuts himself away, we know he loves us but it's too hard for him to cope with.

It's really, really difficult even two years down the track, you think you're getting better, and something happens, you come near to a birthday or an anniversary, or whatever. Even someone else being killed on the back of a ute, brings it all back as though it is the day that it happened. It's really the pits! (Sobs, sighing)

The feelings of despair and that you are alone. I think maybe I over react, feeling more sorry for my self than I should be. But for God's sake, we have lost a daughter, as the rest of my family has lost a sister. Sometimes I (sigh) can't understand how people can get on. Even though outwardly I am getting on, you break inside. I've heard people say 'a broken heart,' - you know what a broken heart is when you've lost one of your children. (Sigh)

It hurts; I still can't come to terms with the fact that we had such a great relationship. She'd ring up and she'd always say "I don't mean to be bossy Annette, but I think you should do this or I think you should do that," its such a waste of a young life. (Sigh)

For a person like me who was always in control of my life; I was able to cope bringing the four children up by myself when my husband had his accident, while he was in Shenton Park. Through twelve years, about nine operations, I worked, I looked after the kids, I did what had to be done, and I was able to cope. Even when I was diagnosed with heart disease, I was able to cope. (Sigh) The day that we were told that Chantelle was gone, that changed forever.

I tried hard to go back to work, but I don't feel comfortable with strangers, meeting people. (Sigh) I pushed my friends aside for a long while, friends as they are, they knew what I was going through, and they all took a step back and waited for me until I was ready. I feel secure going out with my friends, my husband, and family, but I don't want to go down the street. I am happy being at home. Shopping becomes a trauma; I do it because half the time we are out of food (laughter), we have got to eat. Sometimes Peter comes with me. I have learnt to go to Perth by myself.

I think the city is okay because there's no one there that I know and, most of the time, I feel that no one can encroach on my area. Invade my space I suppose you could say. I don't cope with things as well any more, even my husband's recent illness, I found it difficult. Going down town is very difficult for me. I am quite secure within my own environment. I would stop off at Mundaring (when visiting my husband in hospital) and do the shopping I needed rather than go to the local shops.

Our eldest son lives not far from where Chantelle was killed. I can't go to where she was killed anymore, in the beginning, I could to leave flowers, but now it's too traumatic. In the past, we'd either call in to see Chantelle or she would come over to her brother's. There are times I have driven from our son's house over to Charlie Gardiner's Hospital to visit my husband, sobbing the whole way because I haven't got her there to go and see. There are times when I'll go and get some flowers, to put where Chantelle was killed, and I'll drive back home. I just get so hett up about it. It's not worth putting myself through the stress of going there. There's no reason staring me in the face, it's just my body gets...I get so anxious.

A friend took me to Perth a couple of weeks ago, for my birthday, for lunch. I got in a crowded shop and I just wanted to run, (sigh, sob). I just feel that so much has been taken away from me (sniff, sob) and for somebody that was so outgoing, (sniff) and able to cope with anything, I find that, very debilitating (sobs). Nothing prepares you, nothing at all. To think that someone who had it together has to go and see a psychiatrist to be able to deal with every day life, you really wonder what it is all about. There are times when I go to sleep crying and I wished I'd never wake up. (Sniff) Even though I love my family (sobbing, sniffles) dearly, and they all support me, but the pain is so great (pause, sniff).

People say to you 'oh you've got to get on with life.' You **are** getting on with life 'cause you get up in the morning. There's many a time, God forbid, I'd like to smack them in the face (Laughter). They have no idea, and I honestly think sometimes people that say that, would never be able to deal with what's been dealt to people that have lost family through an unnecessary tragedy. Then you have people saying, "How can you be so strong I couldn't deal with it. How do you manage?" There is no answer to that. We do manage, as we said, you get up in the morning, you do everyday chores, some days you don't want to do it, but you do. In the earliest days, you do it out of (sigh) pure shock. I think you're in shock for so long that everything is just a haze.

As I go on, the pain is still there but I feel a lot of anger. (Sigh) By anger, I suppose it is resentment more than anything. At what his stupid action did in two seconds: somebody that was so close to us was gone. I hear one song on the radio and it breaks my heart. To listen to her music I can't do it yet, for everybody else you try. (Sigh) I think, he can go on with life (sniff) - we go to the cemetery" (pause.) I'd give anything to be able see her in jail - once upon a time, I would have died if I'd said that (laughter). His life goes on, he will come out of jail, death is forever.

Honestly, I don't think that I can ever accept Chantelle's dead. You can't have a child and go through what you go through bringing up children; the love... there wasn't a lot of bad times with Chantelle. She loved and cared about everybody, and I suppose that is the hard thing about it, that someone who had so much to give, not just for herself and her family, but for other people, he took that away.

I know she got on the back of the ute, that was her decision. On the other side of it, if you want to get down to the 'ifs' and the 'whys' (how many times do you say that?). She didn't have much choice, a skipper drank too much, she had seventy cents to get home, what else, what other option did she have. I'd always said to her never walk home, never in the dark or anything like that so... (Sniff.) The driver was proved to be driving dangerously. You ask yourself a hundred times, how can one person... (Pause) well two people get up and walk away, and one can't? It's so sad. It doesn't matter how we think about it, it still doesn't change anything does it? The whole scenario is hard to accept. I know she is gone, I know what we are missing out on, and it's all too hard. I know she is gone, and it doesn't matter what is done she is never gonna come back, so I suppose by acceptance, it sounds confusing, you don't accept it, but you well you learn to live with it...

I don't like it! I'm not a person that hates, but I look at people that have got, (God forgive me), no aim in life and they're humans too, I know, but I think, (sniff) for someone that had so much to give, why isn't she here? You think why? You ask yourself a hundred times, a thousand times and you never ever get an answer. There is always an 'if this wasn't' or 'if this', it's one of these things you never get an answer (sniff)...

At times, I had really vivid dreams. As though I was actually at the accident. I had a dream where I could see the three of them on the back of the ute, I saw her laughing, laughing and next thing, because it was so real I woke up and came out of it, and I knew that she was not there. (Sigh.) Your mind puts you through torture. If you could just

shut your mind off sometimes, you'd be able to deal with things. The lack of sleep, I never sleep properly. I think I've had about three nights sleep in two years that I could say was a normal sleep.

It's just absolutely unimaginable (teary, voice quavering) the change it makes in your life, in almost every little thing you do. From going to sleep at night, (sniff)... On a Tuesday night, I've got a little bit better now, but in the beginning, on a Tuesday night, I would have to be in bed by half past ten, because that was the time she was killed. Many a night I would, I'd sleep for the first three or four hours every night, then I'd wake up at one o'clock that was the time that the police knocked on the door. This went on for about eighteen months. I haven't ever stayed up beyond half past ten on a Tuesday. That's just one of those little things, that someone else would look at and say 'oh well you've lost the plot.' Every month on that date, it doesn't matter what, I can't let it go by without it almost becoming my way of thinking for that day. I can't put it out of my mind. It might sound as though I am being over the top, but... (Sigh) It seems like a long time ago, but when your feelings are there, no time matters – time stands still in lots of ways.

But in others, it passes you by. So much happens, so quickly and you forget. For example soon after Chantelle's death, I could not bear to be inside with the blinds down. I had to get outside, I had this feeling I had to go and I would walk, for an hour at a time. I would go by myself and I would just walk. I would come home and I would be ok for an hour or so and I'd want to get outside again. Of a night-time we always used to pull the blinds down in the lounge room, I was almost obsessed with not pulling them down. Whether it was in relation to the night we were told, and whether it was because the blinds were down, I don't know.

It has only been of recent times I have been able to put the blinds down at night-time again. But this walking, I walked and I walked, I'd walk in the morning with a friend, but at night-time, I would just get this thing. I would have to go. Nobody would know where I was or what I was doing. I'd say I have to get out. That was really quite strong; I felt that if I didn't go I was going to go mad, and that I'd scream.

I had forgotten about that, but last night I had that feeling again. I wonder if it's because the anniversary is coming up. I feel agitated, uneasy, and anxious, I fumble, and I am just not myself - it's building up...

The struggles

It wasn't 'til our mutual friend rang me the other day, and then you and I spoke, that I realised Chantelle's death was a homicide, even though the driver was originally charged with manslaughter. That shocked me. I had thought about it as another road tragedy. Which I suppose in one way it is. (Pause) I think 'he didn't intentionally go out to kill her, but through his culpable driving he did kill her.'

He wasn't charged until three months after Chantelle's death. About a week before Christmas, we got word from the police, (who have been absolutely wonderful) to let us know that he'd been charged with manslaughter. As well as having lost Chantelle, we had the thought of going to court hanging over our heads. People asked us, "Oh do you really have to go?" I found that quite bizarre. As even though we didn't *have* to go, there would be no one there for our daughter, what if we had to speak up? He took her away, he killed her, so we had to go, be there, for our own peace of mind. Every month until May, we appeared in court, then we had a break, and then they set the trial down for the anniversary.

The very first anniversary the 22nd of September (1999), it devastated us. I think I rang Victims Support first or the DPP, I can't remember, anyway... (Sniff) and asked them if they could change the date. They changed it to two days later. We waited 'til May 2000, only to learn a week before the court date, that he changed his plea of 'not guilty to manslaughter' to 'guilty of dangerous driving causing death'. We then meet with the DPP to discuss the change of plea and the implications. In my eyes if he intended pleading guilty to something, he should have said guilty from the word go, to save a lot of grief to everyone.

I felt that we all felt and showed compassion to the perpetrator's family, we felt sorry that it had affected all of us in our own way. It has been difficult to deal with the different perspective his family have, and how that has been aired in the public arena. I find that hard and it's caused a bit of anger within our family. When court finished there was no anger, that was the end of it as far as we were concerned, we had to get on, or try and get on and move to the next chapter after the court case, (every little bit seems to be a chapter).

You go through the first birthday, the first Christmas, and strangely enough Easter (another family time), times you can't avoid. I used to go to football with Chantelle - we were both Eagles members. I have not been to football for two seasons. I still pay my

membership every year. I think I can't go 'cause the very last time we went to a game together we had such a great day; it was almost as though it was going to be our last game. At the time, of course you don't know these things. (Sigh)

Every year by Christmas, you think it should be getting easier but it doesn't. This year was her twenty-first, and we have had invites to some of her friends twenty firsts, which we haven't been able to attend. The emotion for both of us has been too great. On Chantelle's closest friend's twenty-first, (she is very close to us all), my husband was very ill (not that I wanted him to be ill) but it meant we didn't have to go. I know how difficult going would have been for us both. Things that everybody takes for granted have been taken away from us.

There is always something that has been taken from you. That you can't do anymore. I try not to let it come forth all the time, for the simple reason is that the anger would build up and the bitterness or whatever, but I just think, (pause) of what I am missing out on. You've been cheated out of having your daughter, your normal family life, and we were a very close family and I resent him for that. I do resent him! I'd have to be honest and say I resent him for killing our daughter. I keep associating him with all the pain that my family are going through.

The pressures

She had a close relationship, her own individual relationship with *every* one of us. Sometimes I find it hard to understand other's ways of coping: not talking; being within themselves; not making comment, or speaking about Chantelle. Some are inclined to back off; or they openly say to me, "I don't want to talk about her. Don't mention her name." Photos have been important to everybody, some of us like them out in the open, others like them in private places. Thank god, we had some photos taken just before she was killed. Having photos, even though sometimes I cry seeing them, keeps her close, so I can talk to her. Often I'll say 'oh you're a cow, why did you do that?' (Laughter) and I growl at her. In the beginning, I used to growl at her - a lot! I'd say you have no right to do this to us.

It is nearly two years and even though it is constantly on your mind, dealing with the pain can lessen some days. The effect and pressures the death of your child and sibling has on the family is quite catastrophic. Every person within the family has their individual emotions, which at times can be difficult to understand and deal with. You have to be aware of everyone's individual emotions. I cannot always hide my emotions as well as the

rest of the family. Occasionally if I can't stop crying, I have a shower; lock my self in the toilet for a while or something... I value my time at home when everyone is away, as I know the effect seeing me so distressed has on the family because there is nothing they can do to help me.

Managing it all

I tried using a diary to help, but I found it a chore. I would cry so much while I was doing it, I felt in a way it was causing me greater pain, because I could cry without writing. (Laughter) I could, I didn't feel as though I needed to write. I did that to try and help, but I think maybe at that time I might have been expecting too much from myself. I have had a couple of close friends and my own GP say to me, 'you are too hard on yourself, you're expecting too much of yourself in such a short time.' I suppose there are positive sides to using a diary. When I was talking to one of the coroners counsellors about writing a diary, they pointed out you can see that one day might be worse, the next day there's improvement and so on. You can see that you are taking more steps forward; I could see what they were saying. I haven't really got down to doing it, one day I might try it again.

I found I have got a lot more from talking to people that have been there, and done it. Because I *know* that person is genuinely saying, I understand. They do understand, cause they've got the same pain in there as what I have and people who haven't been there don't understand **'that'** pain. There are times I wish I had somebody that I could, not pick their brain, but talk to them at any time. I wonder if I had that would I need to see a psychiatrist. I go to the psychiatrist, who sits there and listens, (Sigh pause) and I've got it off my chest, but to me there's nothing as comforting as talking to someone who has been there. I think the biggest thing is the understanding. That they understand your pain and they can say 'yes that's happened to me' and you feel 'oh God I'm not that dippy after all'. (Laughter).

I have a friend who visited me recently - her son was killed seven weeks after Chantelle, so it's nearly two years for both of us. We laughed, and said if we'd done this twelve months ago, we would have cried all day. [Chuckle.] We were able to look at their photos, talk about them and, (pause) just be there for one another. Sometimes I think 'oh you gravitate towards these people, are you getting in a morbid situation, are you looking for that?' [Chuckle]. Others say a similar thing, you do not so much gravitate, but you feel comfortable, as they don't ask you too many questions - that's the bottom line.

In the beginning, I had a couple of people stop and say ‘oh what a tragic accident’ and wanted to know all the gory details. I just said it is really is nothing to do with you, and walked off. I have learned to be rude. (Laughter) I don’t mean it quite like that, but I have learnt not to talk to people that I don’t need to. Maybe I’ll end up lonely but I don’t think I will. At the moment I can’t see a need for me to change, I am quite content doing what I am doing. It’s working for me; though it’s probably the opposite of what I used to be.

I don’t know whether you’d call me an introvert, I was an extrovert before. (Laughter) I was very social, very outgoing, very involved in what the children used to do growing up. It doesn’t worry me, but sometimes I get frustrated by it because I know it’s not really me. Then, when there’s contentment I don’t want to change it either. I suppose it’s your private time, if you’re feeling a bit down or feeling that you need that quiet time for yourself. No one can encroach on it. I’ve got the option; I don’t have to answer the phone if I don’t want to. A couple of times I haven’t answered a knock on the door. I never feel guilty about it. I know what I want to do and really nothing (pause) nothing encroaches on that.

If I don’t feel comfortable with something, I can really say ‘no I don’t want to do it.’ This is where I’ve changed a lot, before I never knew how to say no. I’d be always be rushing here and rushing there. Where as now, I get stressed very easily, it doesn’t take much for me to get anxious. If I have to be with strangers, I haven’t got the protective element of friends and family, and that’s when the anxiety comes, the stress and all that. When I haven’t got control of things. I was a strong person and I’ve lost a lot of that. I was going to say that I haven’t got the confidence, I don’t think it’s that, I think I have just been badly damaged. It does strange things to you. I can’t give you any ‘one’ answer why. It’s something I cannot understand myself.

I have gone through thinking ‘oh for god’s sake get on with it you’re feeling sorry for yourself’. Then the other side of me would talk back (laughter) and say ‘for god’s sake you’ve lost one of the best things in your life - how can you be... you know... You don’t want to feel sorry for yourself, I am not looking for sympathy, and I don’t need sympathy. I can’t tell you what I need; I just need to be where I’m comfortable... Acceptance is important, a friend of mine saw me in Coles the other Saturday morning. I whizzed in at eight o’clock she elbowed me and said, “I suppose you think because you’ve got those glasses on, no-one can see you.” (Laughter) I said, “Well that’s the idea,” I just gave her a

hug, because she knew why. (Laughter.) When I am wanting to be invisible, I think ‘oh you stupid woman.’ Inside I am so churned up; I think oh why do it? Is it that important? But ask me why, and I can’t tell you.

There are times when I think ‘do I need extra help?’ But I can’t get an answer. I think maybe I should go and get help from somebody professional. Maybe it is abnormal. I want somebody to tell me... (Laughter.) It is a struggle, ‘cause you struggle with yourself, wondering whether (pause) you are normal. What is the norm, when it comes to grief? I really think there are not enough reading materials to help you understand what you might be going through. You need reassurance that you’re not slowly going down the drain (laughter).

So, by sharing my grief and feelings, I hope that I have been able to help others understand some of their own feelings. Try to remember that there isn’t a rulebook for dealing with your loss – when coping with the loss of a loved one there is *nothing* normal!

I will never see Chantelle reach her 21st birthday, finish her degree, marry, or become a Mum (and I know she would have been a fantastic mother with her natural caring nature) and it pisses me off!!! I feel cheated out of the hugs, the kisses, the bubbles, the noise, and the music! The happy memories of Chantelle are ours to keep forever and they are what sustain me.



Lady of the Dawn

*Lady of the Dawn
You opened up my sleeping eyes
I never knew that I was born
I like you for your body
But I love you 'cause you're wise
I am your prisoner
You're my Lady of the Dawn*

*You're the dealer in this strange uncertain
game
Take my cards and deal again
I can feel my life is changing
Woman, now you've taught me how to learn
Teach me to earn the love you gave to me
The love you gave to me*

*I was waiting in the darkness of the night
Only now I see the light softly shining in
the silence
Woman, if you really hold the key, turn it
for me
And help me understand
Help me understand*

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Chapter 9

LADY OF THE DAWN

Faith is a bird that feels dawn breaking and signs while it is still dark.

(Author unknown, sent to Lizzie's Mum, printed for Lizzie's funeral service)

Me

To be able to have my say about the events surrounding Lizzie's murder and the ensuing years has been, and is, both painful and cathartic. There is so much more to be done to help and support orienteers of homicide. I dedicate this to the women that I love: Lizzie, Mum, Karen, Jessie, Laura and Ann.

The events

My life changed on September, the eighth 1997, when I got a phone call to go and pick up my youngest daughter and her cousin from school. Liz hadn't picked them up. From that phone call, I had a very, uneasy feeling, and I thought she might have had a car accident or something. She would never have not organized to pick up our girls. When I got home, the car was still there, um and Liz was (pause) in the bathroom, (pause) dead under the water. It was just the most, (pause), gut wrenching feeling I have ever had in my life, and that feeling continued for months. We thought it was an accident. The police came and said it was a suspicious death. Later it became a murder investigation. I can't really explain things in terms of time that people can understand. Time was just a different thing for me. My mind and spirit were shrivelled. I was in a dark, dark tunnel.

After finding Liz, (pause)... what happened after that was about six months of intense police investigations. On that night, I wasn't even allowed into my house. All personal things belonged to the police, to the state, because it was a murder investigation. It's just unimaginable to have (pause) your expectations of privacy, your personal things, your existence, not only invaded by a murderer but invaded by society. Um, yeah... lots of things were incredibly unbelievable. It wasn't officially confirmed to me until about four days later, that it was actually a murder investigation, not an accidental death. It was made look like an accident. I was lucky to have family next door, and family very, very close spiritually and geographically, who all banded together for support. We'd all lost someone very special in such a horrible and brutal way.

The continuing police investigation involved intense scrutiny of Lizzie, and my personal life. They went back to boyfriends and girlfriends. There is a group of people in Western Australia that knew more about me, than I really figure anyone had a right to know, not that it mattered. But to go back to old partners and stuff like that was a bit hard. As a result of the investigation, I think there were about seven hundred people that were swabbed for DNA, out of that seven or it might have been closer to eight hundred, males and females, only two people refused. The police were certain that DNA way was the way to go. I completely supported that. I don't think there are any valid reasons, to object to being DNA tested. The only reason is if people have something to hide.

The impact

I have often described what happened as being like someone getting a knife and cutting me right up the guts and opening me out, and poking at little bits and pieces. The police investigation was incredibly intrusive. They took all the private notes and computer disks and that type of stuff that were Liz's. So, they knew more about Liz, than I did, initially, because she had her personal thoughts in her journal an electronic diary basically.

I was questioned about things that they knew but I didn't. They had different angles on some things, wrong angles. Liz was doing some work at Perth Bible College on biblical counselling, and she used a word, which is common in counselling work, as people being seductive. It applies to their type of personality and how they interact but the police found it very hard not to look at that apart from in a sexual way.

I have never ever read, or seen on a movie, or anything, how personally intrusive police investigations into homicides are. It took me quite a while to come to terms with that fact. Initially I made myself two promises; the first one was to look after our girls the best that I could. Having the family support around it made that job, I don't know if easy is the right word, but it didn't make it as hard as what it could have been, and what it probably has been for others. The family support that I got was incredible.

The second promise that I made to myself was that I would do anything that I had to do to help the police to find the murderer. If that meant leaving myself open and having my life torn apart, well that was part of the price to pay. I have a lot of respect for members of the police force that carry out this part of society's work. Through the investigation, the two officers Phil and Mary were more or less friends; they were friends to my girls. The girls knew that they were trying to catch the "robber" as Laura my youngest daughter called him. They'd come around at all sorts of times, like when the kids would be having

a bath and Laura would call out “is that Phil and Mary? Come in and say hello! ”. They would sometimes bring little presents. They were a part of our lives then. We still see Phil who has moved out of the Police Service.

The supports

There is a lot of the story that doesn't come out in the media. There is a lot of potential joy that comes out meeting the new people. One thing I found quite difficult was being recognised. Some people just couldn't look at me. I felt as if I there was something wrong with me but I eventually I saw it as their problem not mine. Being noticed was very, very hard to come to terms with but eventually as the time and the investigation progressed there were strangers that would come up to me in the shopping centre and say nothing, but would pat me on the shoulder. Others would come up and say that they or their whole congregation were praying for me. These seemingly little things were enormously uplifting and helped me greatly.

Initially I thought that I was all alone or our family was all alone. That support eventually helped me realise that what had happened affected the community. That is the fact that a beautiful woman, a lovely young mother, beautiful wife, in her own home, planning to go out and buy her youngest daughters fifth birthday present, could be just murdered - taken away by a complete stranger (as we found out). Some journalists have also said to me that it has affected them quiet deeply.

The fact people can be just getting on with their life and this evil can come out of nowhere and brutally take them away had affected the community quite a lot. I felt I had the support of many people. Strangers coming up and saying that they were praying for us, that certainly helped. There are many little stories, little things that helped a lot of generosity, a lot of people, strangers ringing up and giving me support. A real estate agent wrote and offered to sell the house for nothing, if I wanted to leave. Lots of little things meant quite a lot, just people's concern helped.

A third promise I made to myself was when I met you through the Homicide Victim's Support Group, and I found people that I could truly share my, souls pain with. I don't know how to describe it, truly, just truly deeply share bewilderment, pain, anger at the injustice of it all. (Sigh.) From there, I made the commitment that I would help the support group; give back to the support group. Make it easier for people that are going to become secondary victims of homicide.

So, I've made three promises that I intend to keep. One of them has been fulfilled. That is that, Dale Mitchell is now behind bars. Our prayers were answered and I don't think many people realise the significance of the fact that he gave himself up. Only God knows where we would be now if he had not done that. The investigation is out of my life. There are a few police officers that are friends and still part of my life.

It's hard to look back and describe the jumble of feelings about what has happened. I can see how some people could turn inside and become reclusive and bitter, but that's not part of my make up. I think my anger, my bitterness and resentment was by the grace of God channelled in to helping the Homicide Victim's Support Group. Learning that there were people in different stages and being there, being part of the group, facilitating and helping others, I think Lizzie would be happy for me in what I am doing. That's always a thought I have.

I can see the Homicide Support Group struggling ahead. It is a difficult group to be a part of, with different people at different stages; there are different energy levels. To go anywhere from here the Group needs proper funding. I don't know how long the group will be part of my life. I suppose it'll always be part of my life. I'd like to see it strong when I step down as Convenor. This is my second year. I look at other states and what they've got in the way of support through government funding; facilities to help support people, and I would like to see the West Australian group have it's own facilities, - respite cottages and stuff like that. But the group has to fit in with my life as it is now, and that's still evolving.

The group helped me to learn what to expect, through others who had been through trials, through the criminal justice system. I joined the group within about two months, or three months of Lizzie's murder. So, I was very, very raw when I joined... I had quite a lot of informal discussions with a few members of the group, on their lives and the murder of their loved ones. It helped me to put myself, and my life into a bit more focus. With the support that I had, I viewed myself as one of the luckier people of the group.

How and why I can say that...

I am lucky 'cause I still have my, our, two beautiful girls. They're a big focus of my life and there are people within the group that have had their children taken away from them, so in that sense I am lucky. I am lucky to have the support, the family support. I am lucky that the perpetrator gave himself up, because there is a possibility it could still be going on now. There is still a lot of things in life to be thankful for.

The struggle

It certainly hasn't been easy street. (Chuckles) The hardest thing was going home, to the house that that we built and Liz not being there. A lot of people were surprised that I stayed in the house, but there was a lot of love in that house, and the evil, that's the only thing I can call it, the evil that visited there, would not out weigh at all the love and the joy, and the presence of Liz.

I spent months and months of nights alone after the girls had gone to bed. I got into a bit too much alcohol, which from talking to a lot of group members is not an uncommon thing. I'd spend hours and hours outside, just sitting and wondering and going through, trying to work out where my life was going. I did a lot of grieving in that time. I think that has also helped me recover as I have done so far. Many, many, lonely, lonely hours and many, many, thoughts and memories of those happier times. I know in my heart that Lizzie would like me to be happy, and like the girls to be happy, and we don't, refrain from talking about Mummy at all. It's an ongoing process for kids, as they grow up they'll reprocess what's gone on, and what's happened. I have some very extraordinary and special conversations with my girls, and their perspective and their point of view helps me greatly.

I think my sense of social justice has been and *is* being honed. The amount of resources that society puts into the perpetrators compared to the amount of resources that are put into (pause) helping victims and survivors, there is just such an extraordinary imbalance. The justice system needs to be developed a lot more, to take into account victims and survivors points of view. Having a system, and a society, that takes over your life in one sense in relation to the meting out of justice. A system that deals with survivors as witnesses and just that, or as people who can identify bodies or people who can help with investigations, that has to change. I don't necessarily support taking anything away from the system that helps the perpetrators, but I would like to see more resources put into the people that are affected - the victims, the survivors. There has got to be a change in the imbalance.

There are no rights; there's no 'Bill of Rights' for victims of crime in Western Australia. There are some guidelines in an Act known as the Victim's of Crime Act but there is no real recognition that there is a huge power imbalance.

Society takes over the capture, and the punishment of offenders, but it doesn't do too much, especially along the homicide lines, of helping the people that are left. Through my

involvement in the Homicide Victim's Support Group, I am on a number of committees so I am not saying that there aren't people within the government and society that aren't trying. There *are* good groups and people there, the Victims Support Service and that. But it's being thrust into this area; it surprises me that there is such an imbalance. I am doing what I can to change that.

A 'Bill Of Rights for Victims' is recognition for secondary victims - recognition that in a homicide the primary victim is not with us. Yet secondary victims are involved in a so called justice system where they can be hounded by defence lawyers, their loved ones name and character can be dragged through the mud and there's not much opportunity for people to stick up for the murdered person in such a system. People who least deserve it are constantly revictimised by the processes. Secondary victims of homicide, the loved ones that are left, have got very, very special needs that should be catered for. Those needs haven't been catered for because until recently, 1997 there has been really no organised voice in WA. I see the Homicide Victim's Support Group as being that organised voice, for the people who have been murdered, and the people who are left. Victims of homicide had never got together before and discussed issues. I often think when someone is murdered of the families, and friends who group together just to exist, to just get through the experience.

In 1997 the Victim Support Service got few people together and realized that there *is* a need for support, - for *life* support - support just to keep on living. I believe that the group harnesses the collective anger at the injustice in the system and channels it into positive change within the "system." However, the major function of the group is just basically to be there and to, do whatever needs to be done to help. If it's a hug or, or a good cry on each other's shoulders, or whatever. That is the main thing, but the second thing is to make sure that people, who have the bad luck to join our group, can go through it a bit lighter.

I would like to see part of the group focus on recovery after such trauma. To fight the fights that need to be fought, but not lose focus. To not let the murderers take away anything more.

DISCUSSION OF LANDMARKS

It is easy to carry the past as a burden instead of a school. It's easy to let it overwhelm you instead of educate you.
(Rohn 1994:47)

The Process of gathering the information

This research process is based in interpretive, non-directive narrative methods. Six interviews were conducted, and presented as complete stand-alone narratives. One participant, Natasha, in contrast to the other five, had no intimate experience of homicide. This was included to illustrate that one can have preconceived ideas about what it might be like in the event of a loved one being murdered.

The process has been collaborative in nature and all narratives are what each person wanted to say about their experience. The drawing out of themes was done by identifying themes in each narrative then identifying the most common, then discussing them in relation to the four main areas identified in the research question. I then noticed a number of common issues mentioned by all participants, yet each experience of it was different. These I discuss in relation to 'themes of difference.'

Presentation of interpretations

Natasha's Interview

Natasha's interview illustrates that we can hold inherent preconceptions of who is likely to be murdered and of how and by whom, and in what circumstances. Natasha's conversation shows that prior to having the experience we can have a rationale and a process for minimising and distancing our loved ones and ourselves from the risk of being murdered.

Looking at Orienteer's descriptions of their reality

This section explores the main themes that appeared across our 'individual realities'. During this discussion I use the terms, 'we' 'us' and 'our' as I believe that the themes are about our loved ones, our experiences and how we have made meaning of them. To say 'I' or 'participants' or 'orienteers' detracts from us as people, it objectifies our experiences (individual and collective). I thereby clearly and expressly state that **this discussion is from my perspective only.**

What I interpreted the experiences to say about meaning making

By reading these realities it becomes obvious how overwhelming, often all consuming, diverse and elongated our experiences of searching, questioning, and making meaning are. This supports Brown's (1991) suggestion that, "murder takes more than just a loved one. It often takes a survivor's marriage, finances, relationships, health and the very will to live" (p.195). I would suggest that the predominant theme to emerge was that we had to learn to live in a world, which could be explained or made meaning of in so many differing and contradictory ways.

The world

We think of the world as a place that we know and that is familiar to us. We commonly assume many things about the world, such as; the sun comes up in the morning, the moon at night. We anticipate we will die when we are old, as will our loved ones. We expect others in our world to be kind, caring and compassionate. When a loved one is murdered, all prior beliefs and assumptions used to structure our understandings of the world are thrown into complete chaos. My comments, "there is a whole process of reframing how you understand the world... Homicide is a process of learning that there are certain things, that there is no identifiable cause and effect... The answers you have are the answers you have..." illustrate this.

The loss of normalcy and being totally unprepared for the world you encounter

By reading all the 'individual realities', I see that many things change in relation to how we previously experienced the world, what is 'normal' and what is 'possible' prior to our loved one(s) being murdered. Nathan explains, "Before that [Raylene's murder] I was a normal little kid... we were just a completely normal family." When describing the impact of losing Chantelle, Annette says, "It is just absolutely unimaginable the changes it makes in your life, in almost every little thing you do." Lee tells us "No one ever thinks it is going to happen to them. I mean sometimes when I wake up I still can't believe it." Richards tells us "I have never read, or even seen on a movie, or anything, how personally intrusive police investigations into homicide are." All these things indicate that the very foundations of our belief systems are challenged by the occurrence of a homicide. This is in line with Harrison's (2000:39) finding, where one father summarises "We were a normal private family, with aspirations and problems, thrust into the public eye, taken from an ordinary world into a different world. A world that is horrific and strange; a world that you cannot be used to, a world upside down."

The world becomes foreign and unsafe

Overwhelmingly it seems that the world becomes a place that is foreign, and unsafe, for ourselves and for the wider community, as it suddenly contains 'bad people' that do 'bad' and unanticipated, unthinkable things, for no logical reason. Nathan summarises this by saying "You get this sensation, questions of why, why, why, why? There is no reason for it, bad things happen to good people and that's all there is to it." He goes on to later say, "There comes a time where you have to accept part of humanity, part of society, is the violence and the loss of life that goes with it. You can't really make sense of it." The experience of homicide challenges our notions of the natural order and goodness of the world.

Life is suddenly fragile and tenuous

Life is no longer a right, a given, to be taken for granted, rather it is suddenly fragile, precious and valuable. This is evident in comments such as mine, "I feel that people are often unable to deal with how vulnerable we are as humans; how tenuous life is ...", Annette illustrates this with her comments, "You look back and think something as innocent as hopping on the back of the ute, like she did, she would have been having fun. Someone else's stupidity wrecked our life. [Later saying] ... his stupid action did [that] in two seconds: somebody that was so close to us was gone." Nathan points out "My perception of reality changed; the grim fact that life can be taken away. The boogiemanager took on a new meaning."

What does death mean?

Many of us questioned what we understood death to mean; our dreams and concepts of spirituality and faith played a major part in this. Lee tells us that after having her cards read by a psychic, "I realised that there was something after dying besides blackness, which is what I used to think." Nathan talked about his dreams, "I used to have these dreams that she'd come to me and we'd talk. I think those dreams were completely normal. The mind's way of sorting out things it wanted to say, sorting out little bits and pieces that you couldn't really hope to do in reality." Many of our informal conversations talked about how we had redefined what death meant. I remember one person saying during our meeting, "As soon as I understood what death was, that made it easier to deal with."

Powerlessness and invasion

The world became a place in which we had very little control over the events that took place and the subsequent intrusions in our lives, which resulted in us often feeling powerless, vulnerable, and invisible. This begins with the act of murder and continues in a variety of ways, dependant on the circumstances and particulars of the murder. Richard illustrates these feelings, “It’s just unimaginable to have your expectations of privacy, your personal things, your existence, not only invaded by a murderer but invaded by society.” It seems that we all experienced these emotions; the catalyst for each of us was different. For example, Annette mentions the courts, Nathan and Lee discuss powerlessness in relation to preventing other crimes. I talk about it in relation to the media coverage that was traumatic in that it announced Kyle and Latisha’s names just as all their school friends were in the car on the way to school. Lee mentions that the press “didn’t want to speculate but they suggested it might be [a Claremont serial killing]. Nevertheless, you know, they didn’t want to say that and upset the family or anything like that, not that they hadn’t already.” Richard reiterates the thoughts of many authors when he suggests that the development of real rights for orienteers (with accountability attached) would help to counteract some of this sense of powerlessness and invisibility we experience (Rhydderch 1998; Beresford 1996; Casey 1994). The proactive supply of information was another suggestion (Newburn 1990).

A world of Contradictions

Our worlds became paradoxical, full of competing interests and opinions. Nathan in a subsequent conversation termed this, “the duality of world views.” This saw me realise that on the one hand we had support and care from so many different people and sections of the community, yet there were also social systems that ignored our feelings and needs. We identified knowing the goodness and beauty of the world, as well as the horror and ugliness of it. Judgements, especially those made publicly, about our families, our loved ones and us, were often hurtful, and in stark contrast to the care and compassion, we received from others in society. We want to forget the murder and the horror of it, but simultaneously we need to remember our loved one. Further, we noticed how ironic it is that many people show a keen interest in media exposure of homicide cases, yet often they do not want to talk about it with us. Nathan says “I will talk about it freely to anyone who is not going to be smart arsed or bullshit about it.”

No escaping memories

There is no reprieve from the reminders of a loved one, be they good or bad. The world becomes full of visual and audible reminders of our loved ones – the things they loved and lived for, or the events and the people that took them from us, and the social systems and structures we encountered as a result. We all discussed the impacts both positive and negative of remembering, and the role of things such as hearing a song, seeing the news, photographs and similar events occurring. Can you imagine something as simple as going to the supermarket to do your shopping, and seeing your loved ones favourite foods on the shelves, hearing their favourite song being played through the pipe music, or seeing someone that reminded you of them, even having someone walk past wearing the perfume they always wore. Lee talks about listening to her music; Annette discusses how she can't do that. Nathan talks about how just hearing the word rapist impacts on him, saying, "It even sounds disgusting. It really triggers off bad memories when I hear about girls being raped at a tender age or being molested and then killed."

Our lives

We give our lives meaning through many things. Such as what we are good at, how well we perform our roles in society, what we have to look forward to in our futures, how we are seen by our friends, our family and the community, and so on. When a loved one is murdered, many of those things that previously gave our lives their shape are taken. Brown (1991:184) (a counsellor whose father was murdered) illustrates this when she says "someone once said, 'death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live.' And such is the encapsulation of murder"

The barrage of different emotions

The things that we had to face in our lives since the murder of our loved ones are diverse. The emotional consequences and ramifications we identified included feelings of distrust, vulnerability, guilt, responsibility, fear, loneliness, isolation, anger, resentment, desperation, depression, pointlessness, numbness, being cheated, even feelings of being suicidal. Nathan articulates some of these emotions when he says, "There was a lot of fucken rage, a lot of anger for me. The first sensation was of absolute grief. 'Til rage and hatred took over..." Annette encapsulates beautifully how these emotions can be in stark contrast to each other when she says, "I will never see Chantelle reach her 21st birthday, finish her degree, marry or become a mother ... and it pisses me off!!! I feel cheated out of the hugs the kisses the bubble the noise and the music! The happy memories of Chantelle are ours to keep forever and they are what sustain me."

Intrusive thoughts and images

Accepting the *why* that our loved one died was particularly difficult for us, this may be due to the intrusive thoughts and images we had about our loved one's last moments, or the scene of the murder (real or perceived). I distinctly remember relating to what Richard said to me some time ago in a conversation, "There was no way I could ever deny Lizzie was dead, the image of her was burned into my brain." The struggle is coming to terms with how our loved ones died and learning to manage the thoughts we have about their last moments, or the images that we have been left with. Nathan alludes to this when he says, "We were told that she died very peacefully, in her sleep, no pain. That meant a lot you know... I remember being told she died in her sleep, and she had died without pain or suffering." Going on to say later "I guess I am older now, I realise the implications of my sister being murdered then raped. That's just fucken horrible, to take a little child like that and to turn it into a sexual object is fucken, is absolutely repulsive."

Questions without answers

It seems many of us felt that we had struggled with the fact there are so many questions and so few answers. For example, I said, "For the first eighteen months the more I searched for answers ... the more questions I came up with." Nathan expressed "I've got a lot of questions but not enough answers unfortunately..." Annette says, "You ask yourself a hundred times, a thousand times and you never get an answer." Richard questions how "a beautiful woman, a lovely young mother, beautiful wife, in her own home ... could be just murdered – taken away by a complete stranger." Interestingly Lee doesn't mention questioning 'why' it happened to Jane, but she does question where she went, with whom etc. Does this questioning grow out of the dominant scripts we are given throughout life, that there are cause and effect relationships, that nothing happens randomly. It seems that the challenge for us is, how to live without the answers we are taught to expect.

Judgemental attitudes

Judgements and opinions expressed about the perpetrator and the degree to which they are held accountable for their actions affected some of us, seeing that we thought of the world and people in it as cold and heartless. The actions or opinions expressed, or the lack of them, by the perpetrator's family and friends had an effect on two of us. I reflected on how hurtful it was to receive "no sympathy card, no flowers..." Annette mentions how "it has been difficult to deal with the different perspectives his family have and how they have been aired in the public arena."

Likewise the judgements made about our family members, be they our loved one or other family members, or even us, had an impact on us all. Nathan says, “I think a lot of people judged my mother as a stereotypical single mother, white trash. In little ways I felt judged as a young boy.” Annette alludes to the possible judgements about Chantelle getting on the back of a ute. Richard talks about how the police misconstrued Lizzie’s use of the word seductive, Lee talks about the judgements made by people on the bus and the self-awareness group leader, and although it did not come up in the interview, I often get asked, “what did you do to make him do that?” Lee (1996:57) discusses how “all participants [in her study] spoke of the world as being an unfair place and of how the criminal justice system, and the media, compounded by rumours and gossip, had failed them.’ This does nothing to rebuild our lives, or restore our sense of faith and trust in the world or the people in it.

Questioning, searching, and continuing a relationship with our loved one

Our lives needed to be realigned, the hooks on which we had previously hung reality, our beliefs, and facts had suddenly been thrown out of alignment or ceased to exist completely. Therefore, we needed to find new hooks on which to hang our new reality, our new lives, and new facts. This involved a process of questioning and searching for an order to life that gave rise to a method for, and reason for, going on. In essence, we were developing a new set of assumptions and way of making meaning about the world. We all expressed that our loved one(s) lives, opinions, and values played a part in this process. This is evident in comments such as Nathan’s; “I know that Raye would be happy if I have a happy life.” Alternatively, when Richard says “I think Lizzie would be happy for me in what I am doing. That’s always a thought I have.” This fits with the notions of Romanoff and Terenzio (1998:708) that those affected by traumatic grief “need time and opportunity to transform their relationship to the deceased and to accommodate to a changed assumptive world.”

Rituals

Rituals, though they may change with time, were something we identified as helpful to us when trying to make new meanings. Lee identifies how helpful it was to send Jane a letter from her favourite place at the beach. Annette talks about how walking and keeping the blinds open were two of her rituals. Nathan and I discuss how the viewing and funeral were poignant rituals in our experience. Lee identifies how she “goes there [to the cemetery] occasionally and have a Strawberry Champagne with her [Jane]... pour it over

the bloody thing” and how she likes “to have a drink with her now and again and play some of her favourite music.”

Expectations of our lives

For many of us our expectations of our lives before, and of our lives after needed to be realigned. Our expectations that all people in our lives are good, kind, and caring, is murdered along with our loved ones, this is especially noticeable in my case where I knew the perpetrator. Especially where I say, “... he had planned the whole thing, from way back in June. All [this] was hard to comprehend. How do you plan to kill your children? It was so hard for me to make sense of, or try and understand you know.” Even our inherent notions about what would happen and how we would be treated if someone we loved was murdered had to be altered, in accordance to each of our experiences. Lee talks about expecting her family to come closer together and become more accepting of her alternative family, and how she doesn’t feel, they have. I talk about expecting that three dead bodies will automatically make a crime ‘real’ not ‘an alleged crime’, which was how the criminal injuries compensation referred to it. Richard talks about how he couldn’t go back into his house, how things suddenly belonged to the ‘State’. Even my leg, becoming the property of the coroner was something that I didn’t expect. Nothing in our lives prepared us for any of these things therefore, they are very unexpected.

Our Lifestyles and direction of life change

Many of us have experienced dramatic changes in lifestyles and the direction of our lives because of our loved ones death. This is most evident in my situation, since I no longer had many of the previous ‘roles’ in my life to fulfil. For example, my role as a mother, and a wife were gone. Richard also who had to adopt new roles, and Lee speaks of her struggles about Jane’s role in her mother’s life. The majority of us have in some way or another become active in the community to make changes to try to prevent further losses or injustices. When talking of his involvement with the Homicide Victims Support Group, and victim’s rights compared to perpetrator’s Richard says “...[after] being thrust into this area; it surprises me that there is such an imbalance. I am doing what I can to change that.” Lee mentions how “One of the positives I have found in all this was in 1996 when I helped organise Perth’s part of the International Women’s March, ‘Reclaim The Night,’ held in Claremont. It was the biggest Perth ‘Reclaim the Night’ crowd ever, over 2000 people. I think it is good to raise people’s awareness; but tragic things shouldn’t have to happen first.” Annette, although not said in her interview, has been active in changing laws regarding safety features on utilities.

The people

Relationships we have with people are believed by many to be crucial, as humans, we are social beings. It is little wonder that the killing of our loved one(s) challenges our faith in people, and our way of relating to them.

Support in our lives is important

There are many types of support, informal, formal, professional support, family supports, and so on. We all mentioned how important the support from family was. Lee defines the support of her family and friends as, "By support I mean open, but they're not always talking about it. Just supporting me in whatever I'm doing in everyday life and they ring me up and say do you want to do this or whatever." Simultaneously we were all aware that often there are tensions between the ways in which different family members make sense of the experience and the supports they want.

Knowing how or when to ask, even whom, to ask for support was identified as often being difficult. Annette in subsequent conversations said something to the effect that 'often family don't know what to do and families need an outside perspective. She said in her interview, "There are times when I think do I need extra help? But I can't get an answer."

We all identified that there are different sources of support, these included, extended family, chaplains, the church, mentors, friends, psychiatrists, the coroners counsellors, victim support services, police, the community and strangers. In conversations, Annette pointed out that often, free services offered were time limited, or limited because of living in a rural area.

It seemed that everybody found comfort from differing sources of support. Acceptance, respect and non-judgemental support, was predominately what we appreciated. Take Annette's experience in the shopping centre, where she says her friend accepted her ways so "I just gave her a big hug because she knew why." Richard and I talked a lot about how much respect meant to us. How supported we both felt just by having our loss and coping styles, and the memories of our loved ones respected. This all fits with Brown's (1991:195) statement that survivors "...need to feel support from others (either family, a group, or a counsellor). They need validation that their feelings, no matter what they are, are appropriate for what they have lived through. This includes murderous impulses, guilt for surviving, or rage."

Social Processes

Social processes are the structural things that automatically happen in our lives, a bit like the domino effect. When a loved one goes missing and assuming that they are found, or when a murder is discovered, then social processes kick into action. These include things such as the police going to the scene, the coroner doing an autopsy, the funeral, and the investigation that follows. Within and following this, exists a gamut of other, more specific processes that will only be enacted in certain circumstances. These things are considered 'automatic' 'procedural' or 'a normal process.' Brown (1991:196-197) identifies such processes as being overwhelming - something orienteers need help to negotiate, "...not only technically and physically, but emotionally and psychologically." These systems are seen by Brown to interrupt the grief process again and again (p. 197)

Not all systems are negative all of the time

We all identified numerous different institutions and systems in society that impact on the way we each experienced homicide. We all identified the positive impact of the supportive network we encountered, such as family, friends, community, police, professional victim services, and self-help groups. These systems in some situations had helped and supported us. For example, the media have helped Richard and myself, on a number of occasions, to highlight issues of injustice and the needs of the HVSG. Victims Support Services and the Department of Public Prosecutions helped Annette to have the date of the trial changed. However, not all social processes were felt to be positive.

The impact of being processed

Perhaps one of the most common things I have experienced, as have others, is that the media even though it offers to help often changes things, takes quotes out of context and so on, which has been hurtful to many of us. For example, one media story I did with the aim of highlighting a lack of changes to laws since the killing of Kyle and Latisha was to be part of a full page spread about violence restraining orders and the changes needed to the legislation. However, when printed, there was my interview all on its own, no mention of lack of changes, and no subsequent articles appeared. Why I had given the interview was lost, it felt like I had been shown as someone who was just wanted to whinge. Friends even rang me up and asked why I did it?

Other, less positive, influences came from other formal structures in society, such as the criminal justice system, which was seen as having inherent imbalances and shortcomings. This larger system includes the court and investigative process. It was identified as a

stressor because it traumatised and silenced some of us. Richard expresses this, “The justice system needs to be developed a lot more, to take into account victim’s and survivor’s points of view. Having a system, and a society, that takes over your life in one sense, in relation to the meting out of justice. A system that deals with survivors as witnesses and just that, or as people who can identify bodies or people who can help with investigations, that has to change.” Annette talks about how people asked, “Oh do you really have to go [to the court case]? I found that quite bizarre. As even though we didn’t *have* to go, there would be no one there for our daughter, what if we had to speak up? He took her away, he killed her, and we had to go, be there, for our own piece of mind.”

Also identified, as having an impact on our experiences were the policies and processes of life insurance and superannuation companies, banks, the criminal injuries compensation system, the parole system, and the prospect of restorative justice system being utilised. Overwhelmingly these formal systems were thought of or described as foreign, intrusive, impersonal, and lacking in compassion and flexibility.

The Public Nature of Murder

Think about the fact that no one even asks you if you mind that the death is reported. Brown (1991:197) talks about how “Murder attracts the media while they repel friends, co-workers, and those from whom the survivors seeks comfort.” We all identified the media reporting of murders, our own cases, or that of others, as a factor that impacted on us. I spoke of how the media takes no account or interest in their impact on our loved one’s memory, our families, and the friends of our loved ones or us. It is not in my interview, but the media initially ran a headline “Father shoots two children,” and as a result many people asked me ‘how are the children?’ I discussed this with Lee when talking about how the media portrayals impact on us. Nathan mentions how upsetting it is to hear of other cases through the media. Richard mentions factors such as, how many things the media don’t tell, and how his early difficulties associated with being recognised, gradually became positives.

There is not necessarily an obvious end point to encountering social systems

When Nathan mentions the perpetrator being due for parole in 2006, he illustrates that our understandings of our experiences may have to be renegotiated even after a significant time. It illustrates how after the court process finishes other things still may follow, which shatters any notions of ‘leaving it behind’. When he discusses the possibility of having someone in the family involved in the process of restorative justice, he illustrates that

other family member's coping mechanisms can still mean you have to revisit you own. He clearly summarises this when he states, "... things *will* keep coming up, - fifteen years on there are issues arising from the events." What will happen to Lee if, and when, the killer is caught? How will Annette and Richard feel when the perpetrators are released from jail (I am assuming they will be)? Will a parole system take into account their feeling and thoughts? Will they be notified of pending releases and how will that impact on them emotionally? Questions like these make me ask, does the murder experience ever end for some families?

Self

The 'self' has shown up throughout this process as an important part of making meaning, *the tool of meaning making* if you like. The last thing that we – orienteers - stop to think about is ourselves. Initially we are so busy doing all the things that have to be done, that suddenly when we have time to stop and think about our 'sense of self' we realise that we are such different people. We realise that 'our self' has been caught in the currents of the social processes, that we have had no time to absorb or consider how we change to accommodate the ramifications of the murder. Annette alludes to this when she says "In the earliest days you do it out of pure shock. I think you're in shock for so long that everything is just a haze." She and I also spoke about how we put so much pressure on ourselves to 'cope', and about how in the early days we were afraid that if we started crying we would never stop. Richard talks about spending many late, lonely nights thinking about where his life would go; this is putting himself last, at the end of the day.

What is interesting is that our sense of self, that is 'who' we perceive ourselves to be and how we think about the world, the people, our lives and the social processes is the only thing we can change. We cannot change the world, the events that have changed our lives, people, or all the social processes, but we can change our expectations, our way of understanding things and ourselves. We do this to survive. This cannot be done until the initial processes and tasks are done. The importance of how we change ourselves, or how we think about and see things, is evident when you look at all the different struggles we discuss across the four areas of the experience. The fact that attention is not focused inward until relatively late in this process may explain why our grieving process feels elongated.

The relationship between these areas

How do we rebuild our lives, our faith and trust in people, when our worlds become pendulums strung on the end of the fob watch of social processes and systems? It is possible to do, as we have seen by the comments and courage within this dissertation, however it can feel like an emotional roller coaster. I often describe feeling as if I had asked for a ticket to ride the merry-go-round and been given a ticket for the house of horrors instead, and no one would give me a refund!

It seems that once we can regain a sense of self, and develop self empowerment with that, then we can realign the view we take on the post-homicide world, the people and processes we encounter which in turn enable us to make new meanings, even if many of them are polarised, incongruent and fragmented. If done whilst continuing a relationship with our loved one, and contributing toward the prevention of further pain and suffering in the community we live in, then it appears we do not become stagnate in our process of meaning making. This resonates with what Brown (1991: says “Survivors need most of all to be able to grieve – for all that entails for them, for whatever meaning it has for them, and in whatever manner it feels right. Short of hurting themselves or others, there are no right or wrong ways to grieve.”

Further Discussion and areas for future exploration

The above discussion looked across and found common themes, in the following section I would like to draw attention to some of the *differences* that we identified in our experiences of *similar factors*. Previous research based in orienteers experiences has not examined a cross section of modes or types of homicide, or noted *if* there are differences as the result of the different *type* or *mode* of death. Rather it has been done in respect to specific relationships to the deceased, an agency or the perpetrator. For example, Harrison (2000) examines *The Impact of Stranger Homicide on Families and the Need for a Multi-Agency Approach*. Whilst Lee (1996) studies *The Impact of Sibling Homicide: Responses from surviving Siblings*, and Giuliano’s (1998) *Survival and Beyond: An anthology of Stories by Victims of Crime and a Victims’ Resource Guide* is as it sounds - non-specific in the type of victims included. The following discussion is a valuable illustration of things that orienteers, those in a support role, and future researchers may consider when they are trying to make their meanings.

Differences in experiences

Variants in and of our core questioning

The things that we each questioned were diverse. For example for me, central questions revolved around ‘what was family’, ‘how did they behave’, ‘what makes someone you trust breach that trust in such a diabolical way’. For Nathan the questioning around how sex could be viewed as anything other than associate with rape, involved questioning as to what sex meant, how, when, and between whom. For Richard, there were many questions around ‘how can this evil just randomly walk into your home, take someone for no apparent reason?’ For Lee it appears that questions about how an unknown, unidentifiable killer can invade previously safe and familiar public areas, and take people, kill people for no identifiable reason.

These things indicate to me that according to the context in which your loved one(s) are murdered. For example, we more than likely have trust issues with differing people in our lives/ worlds, according to who perpetrated what type of crime and where it occurred. For instance, in my case, the people I knew suddenly became more dangerous than total strangers did, and my home suddenly became unsafe. Lee still has no idea who is dangerous; her local community is unsafe now. Nathan may associate danger with, being at home or, a particular population in the community. Alternately, for Annette and Richard danger might be complete strangers anywhere, anytime.

Community Support: Deserving or non-deserving of it?

The type, amount, and quality of community support offered was another factor that stood out as diverse. Note that predominately our circumstances were portrayed by the media in particular ways. It appears that Richard and I had a reasonable amount of support from certain communities. Perhaps this was due to the fact that (once known) what happened to Lizzie was perceived as being something that could have happened to any of us, therefore she was not to blame in any way. Turning to my situation, the support I received from sections of my local community could be a result of the shock of the other deaths that occurred around that time, and that Kyle and Tish were both young and innocent. Which when combined with the fact that in our society we really don’t like to think of our children dying young (let alone being murdered) and certainly not all at once was shocking to most. However there were judgements made about me around the fact it was a ‘domestic’ situation.

In Annette's situation the fact that we generally anticipate that some of us may die in a car accident, and that she herself had not thought of it as a homicide until approached about this research may explain why community support did not play a large part in her meaning making. Nathan's talks about feeling 'judged' along with his mother, who he felt was seen by the community as 'a typical single mother - white-trash.' Yet, he really doesn't talk about how the wider community responded to him, he does talk about school teachers and school kids. One wonders if, fifteen years ago, the community were not outwardly outraged by the rape and murder of a fifteen-year-old girl in her own home. Like wise, one wonders why Lee does not mention community support. She does refer to the speculation and opinions given about the girls' behaviours, drinking, out at pubs, from good or not-so-good backgrounds, intelligence and so on.

All these things to me indicate that we live in a world that still judges victims and their families in accordance to how, where and by whom they are murdered, and that our experiences of homicide are mediated and impacted on by the expression of public opinion and support – or the lack of it.

Other Isolating factors

Further to this, other isolating factors also mediated experiences. Lee talks about the increased sense of isolation that she felt because of being homosexual. Harrison (2000) discusses dynamics when a homosexual partner is murdered, saying that if we reject a person's sexuality how can we accept their grief. I wondered if this was a factor for Lee. Nathan talks about his deafness and how being different in two ways had made things even more difficult. Annette talks about how living in a small community and being easily identified impacts on her. I discuss how being there, having an attempt made on my own life, and subsequent health issues, impacted on my fears, and my experience. Richard mentions the impact of being interrogated – suspected.

What do these differences mean?

This section highlights that there are distinct differences in our experiences that may stem from two sources, the differences in the *type* or *mode* of murder that took our loved ones and our positions, (social status, age, sexuality, geographic location, economic status, and so on) in the world prior to and after losing our loved ones.

Conclusion

The juxtaposition of Natasha's preconceptions, with the other realities was useful in two ways. Firstly, it may help the reader to identify their own assumptions about homicide, if

in fact they do exist. Secondly, it clearly illustrates a possible process people may employ to distance themselves from the personal risk of experiencing homicide.

Overall, the experience of losing a loved one through homicide is one that is overwhelming, diverse, and drawn out. Our experiences of searching, questioning, and making meaning were impacted on by many factors, (some prior to and others after the murder), as well as by how and who murdered our loved one and the views that our communities took of the situation. We have had to learn to live in a world, which often is inexplicable - cannot be made meaning of, or alternatively there may be many differing and contradictory ways of explaining things. Ultimately the challenge for orienteers is learning to live in a world without the trust, goodness, control, predictability or the loved ones that we have previously depended on to give our lives meaning.

Using Annette's eloquence "by sharing our grief and feelings, we hope that we have been able to help others understand some of their own feelings. Try to remember that there **isn't** a rulebook for dealing with your loss – when coping with the loss of a loved one there is *nothing* normal!"

New questions

Future research, for orienteers, for social work and those in supportive roles, for the community and policy makers

This research has been conducted from an interpretive or post-modern perspective, so I will not state any specific directions that need future attention. The primary reason for this research has been to give a place and space to the voices of orienteers; the secondary aim has been to provide a resource to future orienteers, and the third to give others in society insight into the experience. Consequently, there are limits to the questions raised within this process, as it was not designed with future directions or questions in mind. However in saying this there are things that one begins to ask, questions which do require answers.

Further research that explores how any or each of the many factors, identified in this research, impact on the experiences of orienteers who lose loved ones through similar *types*, or *modes* of murder would be beneficial. Such studies would be useful in preparing future orienteers for what they might experience, or in helping them to know that they are not going mad. Alternatively, such information would be important as a reference for those in supportive roles and as a tool to inform communities, the media and those in social policy making roles how there may be more sensitive ways to carry out their jobs.

Our Reflections of this Process **Reflections – why they are useful**

It is important in interpretive research to reflect and learn not only from the content of research but from the total research process. I have endeavoured to incorporate reflexivity into every part of the process. It is for this reason that I have examined my reflection on the experience, and included the reflections of the other orienteers; I also asked Julie, who supervised this process to provide a reflection on her experience (please see pg 106). I will first reflect on the process. Then I examine my personal reflections, as someone who not only conducted but also was involved in the process. I then look at the reflections of the participants, who without this process could not have happened.

I have used four questions to guide discussions with orienteers: 1) was it difficult to read your 'reality' when it was typed up? 2) Did this process impact on you? If so how? 3) What motivated you agree to participate? And finally 4) did my experience as a secondary victim impact on your agreeing to participate? I adapted these questions slightly for myself, in order to provide my reflections.

As the facilitator of the telling of 'our stories', that is, as an artist presenting a collage in which participants self portraits are exhibited, I incorporated an all inclusive reflective component into the research process, as reflection is important to learning dialectically. This was designed to create a space for us to express both positives and negative experiences we had concerning this research process.

Reflections on the process

This process facilitated the creation of a foundational place and space from which the voices of these orienteers could be heard. They have been told as part of a research platform, as opposed to 'reports' or 'news articles,' by other Western Australian orienteers, academics professionals, and the general community. The strengths of this exploration are that it has been conducted with a small diverse group of people with a cross section of 'types of homicide' experiences, who are from a variety of backgrounds, geographical locations, ages, genders, socio-economic groups, and educational backgrounds. The fact that this research was not quantitative or reductionalist in the way it explored people's experiences was one of its strengths. The small sample size allowed me to spend a great deal of time with participants, making it more collaborative.

Restrictions on the size of this dissertation and the time frame for it, impacted on the depth and breadth of the explorative process.

The Artist's reflections

Was it a difficult process?

This process has been many things, exciting, difficult, enjoyable, exasperating, time consuming, inspiring, terrifying, and rewarding. I have struggled throughout this process with my desire to adequately express and convey the reality of the orienteers experiences, without becoming, clinical, cold, or disrespectful to our loved ones. Finding my way through exhaustive amounts of literature in order to frame these experiences in an appropriate way has been confronting to say the least.

I have at times felt like I have been exploiting people, especially when I have been very time-poor, time restrictions compounded this feeling, sometimes I felt that I am taking control away from participants. I did discuss this with people and they did not feel that I had done either. I have struggled and wrestled with my ability to be within the research, and the artist presenting it. Wondering, not if I could be 'objective', but would I be able to see the landscape as it was being described, or would I paint it as I thought it was going to be?

The process of close (and time consuming) negotiations to ensure conversations were turned into the texts that the tellers wanted and approved of was important. I feel confident that I understood and conveyed people's 'realities' how they wanted them told. It was challenging, to resist the temptation to do this to save time or 'help' as often people would say to me 'what do you think it should say?' or 'you change it to what you think.' Overall the trust that each of the participants had, their desire to help – me and others, and their belief in me, helped me to feel more confident and encouraged me to keep going.

I experience huge resistance to the interpreting and discussion part of the process, as it felt invasive, I felt like I was conducting an autopsy on people's most personal experiences. I overcame this, only by framing this section in the 'we' sense, as opposed to the 'I'.

How this process impacted on the artist

I would say this has been a rewarding experience for me, though at times it has been emotional. I have remembered and shared many experiences, both pleasant and painful,

of my own and others. I have laughed and cried, shared and taken. Ultimately I have been honoured, by being entrusted with the task of presenting the experiences of an amazing, caring, inspiring group of people who live with experiences that for most people is their worst nightmare.

This process has increased my confidence in my ability to complete this task, and in my own meaning making of my homicide experience. This process has raised my awareness that even though there are voices from the margins that can be given a place and a space in the community, there are also those that remain silenced. Such as those, who cannot speak out, without fear of jeopardising investigations or court proceedings, or those that go unrecognised as their loved ones have been killed in a manner deemed deserving or not as a homicide.

Why did I do it?

I conducted this research, in the manner, I did, as I believe that without such voices being heard, the experience of homicide will continue to be something that no one is even remotely prepared for, mentally, emotionally, or practically. This research, whether it is encountered before or after, becoming an orienteer, or when encountering a secondary or tertiary homicide victim, who is a member of ones family, work, or social circles, will be an available local resource. Even if it nothing other than tell someone they are not alone, or that they are experiencing normal reactions to an abnormal event, then it is valuable.

Orienteers Reflections

Responses to the following questions varied. The following answers are encapsulations of responses and comments, not necessarily direct quotes. (I discussed my experience in ‘The Self Interview Process as part of the *Preparing and Planning This Journey*’ section of the dissertation).

Was it difficult to read ‘your reality’ when it was typed up?

“No it was fine.” “It was a little difficult.” “Yes it was, hard but not as hard as I thought. I disassociated and distanced myself from my feelings.” “Initially it was hard – the first time I read it, then it was ok. I was staring straight back at myself – I was a bit disassociated at first. I was surprised at how much sense I made.” “ It was the first time I realised how horrific the things that happened to me were. It is the first time I have told some things and it was hard to read them – they were sad things.” “ It seemed like I was talking about someone else – it was a bit scary.” “ Some things when I was reading jolted me – I just stopped, and it was like I was back there, I guess that is the Post Traumatic

Stress. It was like a time warp.” “ I put off re-reading and correcting and reworking the interview.”

Did this process impact on you? If so how?

“No. Not really.” “ The interview left me washed out – it took a lot of emotional energy.” “It gave me the opportunity to get a focus, perspective into my life.” “I again began to question life and the purpose of it and that.” “It reminded me of hope and faith and how we need to acknowledge things that haven’t been before.” “I was drained after the interview.” “It allowed me to see the progress and the changes I have made. Gave me a timeline.” “I feel that I have been a bit indifferent to the process.” “I was glad to be able to express my views, without other people censoring what I say.” “It allowed me to have a chance to finally have my say.” “I haven’t ever felt that my views are appropriate to share in some situations, even with other people in the same situation, so this meant I could finally say them.”

What motivated you to agree to participate?

“It is good to talk about it sometimes, and I hadn’t done that for a while.” “So there would be something for other people to read.” “To help others understand that it is not only them that grieve – they are not alone in the world.” “It helps my recovery to talk” “It gave me my chance to talk.” “It was an opportunity to offset the media imbalance.” “My chance to say – completely in my control.” “The system disempowers us – this process is empowering as it recognises us, it gives us a chance to have our say.” “Because too often the victims get lost in all the processes and systems.” “It was a chance to help someone else through by giving them something to read.” “So others knew what they might expect.” “With the photos of our loved ones, doing this creates a place and presents the faces of our realities.” “You are a good friend – I was only too happy to help you.” “I thought it would be interesting.” “I was curious to see how I would react.” “Because it is the first chance I have had to explore this.” “I recognised others would read it and maybe say ‘I think that too’ – recognise they are not alone.”

Did my experience as a secondary victim impact on your agreeing to participate?

“When you told me about the title ‘is there a rulebook?’ I thought about it and I thought that is what needs to be done. All right, it is easy talking to you about it – knowing your experience, but it was more important what you were doing and why you were doing it. I decided if we can help someone else down the track, that God forbid it happens to, and it

is going to happen to someone else, then we have achieved something. I just wish someone had done it before. (Laughter).”

“I probably feel more comfortable talking to you about it, than I would talking to someone who hasn’t gone through some kind of grief like that. I probably wouldn’t have agreed to meet with you (laugh), like I wouldn’t do anything if it was media, or, you know, or someone that I didn’t know.”

“I would not have done it if **you** were someone who has not been through a similar experience. I wouldn’t do it. If you can relate to someone, of course you are going to be more open and talk to them a lot more. It’s an unfortunate, well fortunate/ unfortunate gift you have. I mean it’s a by product of something really misfortunate, that something so wondrous can... Your gift of being able to sit down and listen to people you know.”

Supervisors Reflection

A Tribute

No one can read these stories without entering a dark space – one that we would rather imagine did not exist.

To live with loss, particularly an unfathomable loss for which people have no preparation or ‘rule book’, is outside the usual human experience and shatters our deepest beliefs about the world.

However, within the shattered darkness of these narratives, I have witnessed shafts of light. It is light, which is sometimes dawn streaked and pale, sometimes of blinding intensity, that signals astounding human courage to take up life, albeit in a ‘changed for ever’ form, and the resolution to keep alive histories, which require remembering horror as well as joy.

I am an ‘intimate stranger’ to the men and women who have shared their narratives and feel deeply linked and privileged. I marvel at their determination to remain in touch with life, to enact forgiveness, justice, and peace and to demonstrate that miraculously, seeds of hope can grow in the stoniest deserts.

Julie Dickinson

Summary of the Value of a Reflective Process

Interpretist, participatory and narrative ideologies emphasise learning through, dialectical processes that are reflective, and that hold an inherent awareness of the power of listening to people, in a manner that embraces the values of equality, respect, trust, and cooperation. This inquiry has relied heavily on reflective practices; it has assumed that reflection is crucial to interpretist and participatory approaches, as these paradigms value the notion that

1. ...researchers are themselves active participants in the situations researched and that the researcher-situation relationship deserves to be studied;
2. ... the framework and variables of studies themselves change in the course of study; and
3. ... an important way of testing the validity and significance of social knowledge is to feed data back into the setting researched, studying how this feedback influences further action.

Together, these three assumptions provide a framework for systematically learning in settings of organised action – a framework for an ‘action... as opposed to a merely reflective ... – a framework for a collaborative inquiry among all participants in the given setting, as opposed to an inquiry unilaterally defined by the self-designated researcher ‘on’ other respondents.
(Torbert 1981:437)

Having heard all the reflective comments, I believe that this research has indeed achieved its primary aim of providing a place and space where relational knowing has seen the dialectical creation of knowledge. I understand statements about the positive feelings evoked by this process, to mean that this has been to some degree an emancipatory process. Further attention and reflection on any future outcomes (both positive and negative) in both the personal and the political spheres, will be beneficial and will see that the process of knowing does not stop here.

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Appendix A

Ann O'Neill
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0409 116 551
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Honours Student
Date

Curtin University of Technology
School of Social Work
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92667030

Information Sheet.

Title: **Honouring Survival: Is there a rulebook?**

Investigator: Ann O'Neill. Supervisor: Julie Dickinson.

My Name is Ann and I am an honours student, in my final year of a Bachelor of Social Work. I am currently undertaking research to document the experiences of people who have lost a loved one through homicide. I have chosen this topic, as there is very little literature from the victim's 'families' perspective available on this subject.

What information is available on this issue, is usually sensationalised journalistic accounts, over which families have little or no control. As someone who has survived a double murder/ suicide and the attempted murder of myself, I feel that there is much to be said by families that journalists are not interested in telling. Yet, such in depth information would be invaluable to professionals, in their role as supports for families, and to others new to the experience.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I would like to meet with you three or four times, for approximately 1 hour each time at a mutually suitable venue. The first meeting would give you an opportunity to find out a little more about the study and me, before agreeing or declining to participate.

The second meeting would be to conduct an interview, which would be your opportunity to tell me what your experience of homicide was/is like. Ideally this will be tape recorded so that I can type out our conversations. The tape, it will be destroyed twelve months after the dissertation is completed. The third meeting would be to allow you to go through the typed copy of our interview and ensure you are satisfied it says what you want it to. Everyone who participates will be entitled to a copy of the final product.

One of the difficulties with this study, due to the size of Perth and its population, is that I cannot realistically offer you anonymity or confidentiality. Too often the general public do not seem to grasp that we are real people and so too are our loved ones, who are so cruelly ripped from this world. It is for these reasons that I would like to use your real names and circumstances.

I am aware of the sensitive nature of such experiences and how talking about things can stir up emotions. So I am happy to debrief with you after the interview or if you would rather, I can provide the telephone number for Victims Support Services who have counsellors available (ph 08 9221 0444).

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to call or write to my Supervisor Julie Dickinson or myself at the above contacts.

I have included a copy of the consent form, which, should you wish to participate, you can fill in, and post to me (should you feel conformable), alternatively we can discuss it at our first meeting.

I thank you for considering participating and should I not get the opportunity to meet you I wish you every success and happiness that life can offer.

Yours truly,

Ann O'Neill

Appendix B

Date

Informed Consent Form.

Title: **Honouring Survival: Is there a rulebook?**

Investigator: Ann O'Neill. **Supervisor:** Julie Dickinson.

I _____ give my consent to participate in the study being conducted by Ann O'Neill into secondary homicide victims experiences as part of her Bachelor of Social Work Honours research at Curtin University of Technology, Bentley, WA.

I have read the information sheet, and the nature and purpose of the study has been explained to me in a manner that I understand and I agree to participate.

I am aware that I may not directly benefit from taking part in this study.

I agree/ do not agree to the interview being audio taped. (Please indicate by circling the applicable answer.)

I am aware that a third party may transcribe the interview, and that they will be bound by a confidentiality agreement.

I am aware that I will be given the opportunity to delete, modify or amend any part of the interview transcript at any stage of the **inquiry** process, but not after approving my final transcript for inclusion in the thesis.

I would/ would not like a copy of the thesis after it has been marked. (Please indicate by circling the applicable answer.)

I am fully aware that the information gained during the study may be widely published and that I will be identified and that information I consent to going into the final thesis may include personal details (such as names, dates and circumstances, but excluding my contact details).

I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any stage prior to the final thesis being submitted by the researcher to the relevant academic departments, without it affecting my status now or in the future.

I have had the opportunity to discuss taking part in this study with a family member or friend.

I have had the opportunity to ask the researcher for further information and I am satisfied with the information given to me.

I understand I can contact the researcher at any time in the inquiry process should I want further information.

I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.

I agree to provide information that is true and accurate.

I am aware that I cannot name anyone who I may believe to be guilty of a crime but who has not been tried and convicted in a court of law.

Signed _____ Name (please print) _____ Date _____

Contact details:

Address _____ Post code _____

Home _____ Work _____ E-mail _____

Appendix C

Ann O'Neill
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Honours Student
Date

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Appendix C

Information Sheet for Non- Secondary Homicide Victim/s Honouring Survival: Is there a rulebook?

Title:

Investigator: Ann O'Neill.

Supervisor: Julie Dickinson.

My Name is Ann and I am an honours student, in my final year of a Bachelor of Social Work. I am currently undertaking research to document the experiences of people who have lost a loved one through homicide. I have chosen this topic, as there is very little literature from the victim's 'families' perspective available on this subject.

What information is available on this issue, is usually sensationalised journalistic accounts, over which families have little or no control. As someone who has survived a double murder/ suicide and the attempted murder of myself, I feel that there is much to be said by families that journalists are not interested in telling. Yet, such in depth information would be invaluable to professionals, in their role as supports for families and to others new to the experience.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I would like to meet with you three or four times, for approximately 1 hour each time at a mutually suitable venue. The first meeting would give you an opportunity to find out a little more about the study and me, before agreeing or declining to participate.

The second meeting will be to conduct an interview, which is your opportunity to tell me about your perceptions of what losing someone through homicide is like. Ideally, this will be tape recorded so that I can type out our conversations. Should you not request the tape, it will be destroyed twelve months after the thesis is completed. The third meeting would be to allow you to go through the typed copy of our interview and ensure you are satisfied it says what you want it to. Everyone who participates will be given a copy of the final product.

One of the difficulties with this study, due to the size of Perth and its population, is that I cannot realistically offer you anonymity or confidentiality to those participants with the experience. Too often the general public do not seem to grasp that these are real people and so too are their loved ones, who are so cruelly ripped from this world. It is for these reasons that I would like to use the real names and circumstances of those with the experience. Participants without the experience will be given pseudo identity.

I am aware of the sensitive nature of such experiences and how talking about things can stir up emotions. So I am happy to debrief with you after the interview or if you would rather, I can provide the telephone number for Victims Support Services who have counsellors available.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to call or write to my Supervisor Julie Dickinson or myself at the above contacts.

I have included a copy of the consent form, which, should you wish to participate, you can fill in, and post to me (should you feel conformable), alternatively we can discuss it at our first meeting.

I thank you for considering participating and should I not get the opportunity to meet you I wish you every success and happiness that life can offer.

Yours truly,

Ann O'Neill

Appendix D

Date

Informed Consent Form for Non-secondary Homicide Victim/s.

Title: Honouring Survival: Is there a rulebook?

Investigator: Ann O'Neill.

Supervisor: Julie Dickinson.

I _____ give my consent to participate in the study being conducted by Ann O'Neill into secondary homicide victims experiences as part of her Bachelor of Social Work Honours research at Curtin University of Technology, Bentley, WA.

I have read the information sheet, and the nature and purpose of the study has been explained to me in a manner that I understand and I agree to participate.

I am aware that I may not directly benefit from taking part in this study.

I agree/ do not agree to the interview being audio taped. (Please indicate by circling the applicable answer.)

I am aware that a third party may transcribe the interview, and that they will be bound by a confidentiality agreement.

I am aware that I will be given the opportunity to delete, modify or amend any part of the interview transcript at any stage of the **inquiry** process, but not after approving my final transcript for inclusion in the thesis.

I would/ would not like a copy of the thesis after it has been marked. (Please indicate by circling the applicable answer.)

I am fully aware that the information gained during the study may be widely published and that I will **not** be identified and that information I consent to going into the final thesis **will not** include personal details (such as names, dates and circumstances, and contact details).

I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any stage prior to the final thesis being submitted by the researcher to the relevant academic departments, without it affecting my status now or in the future.

I have had the opportunity to discuss taking part in this study with a family member or friend.

I have had the opportunity to ask the researcher for further information and I am satisfied with the information given to me.

I understand I can contact the researcher at any time in the inquiry process should I want further information.

I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.

I agree to provide information that is true and accurate.

I am aware that I cannot name anyone who I may believe to be guilty of a crime but who has not been tried and convicted in a court of law.

Signed

Name (please print)

Date

Contact details:

Address

Post code

Home

Work

E-mail

Appendix E

Confidentiality Agreement

for

Honours Research being conducted by Ann O'Neill

through Curtin University of Technology.

This is an agreement made between _____ and Ann O'Neill on this the _____ day of _____ in the year Two Thousand.

The undersigned agrees that any information on audiocassette tapes provided by Ann O'Neill will be used solely for purposes of transcribing and returning to Ann O'Neill on floppy disc. It is agreed that no copy will remain on any hard disc at any time during the process.

The undersigned further agrees to hold confidential all information contained on the audio cassettes and agrees that it shall be used only for the contemplated purpose, and shall not be used for any other purpose or disclosed to any third party.

Upon completion and/ or demand by Ann O'Neill, all information, including written notes, shall be returned.

It is understood that the undersigned shall have no obligation to hold confidential any information generally known within the community prior to date of this agreement.

X _____ Dated: _____

Signature

X _____

Name (typed or printed)

X _____ Dated: _____

Signature

X Ann O'Neill _____

Name (typed or printed)

Appendix F

Cover letter for Posting out Transcripts and Drafts

Hey there,

How are you? I hope you are well and enjoying the sunshine that has been getting more frequent lately.

I have been very busy typing. I must again say thank you for participating. The interview was wonderful. It is a privilege to have you share your experience with me.

I have enclosed the full transcript of the interview and the first draft of the interview. Please note that I have moved things around, added words in and taken others out. The aim is for it to read smoothly, but still mean what you want it to.

I have tried to make sure that I have bolded all the bits I have added, and I have tried to draw attention to the bits I have moved around. Feel free to take out bits and add others in instead. (But please be aware I really have strict limits to the amount of pages I can use, and I am pushing them already.)

You may also notice I have taken out peoples names, other than your own, as they have not agreed to be interviewed - to identify them raises some legal issues. Given we are not changing your identity anyone who knows you will know who you are speaking about.

It has been difficult in places where you have spoken of other people, I have had to try and paraphrase certain bits, but I hope I have kept the point you were trying to make. If I have gotten it wrong, please correct it; make it say the point you want to show.

I will give you a call in the next few days to arrange a good time to catch up and go through it with you. But if you want to ring me and ask anything, please feel free to.

Thanks again, and take good care of yourself.

Warmest regards

Ann

Appendix G

UNPACKING THE MANY SUITCASES OF HOMICIDE

This appendix was originally conceived as my literature review. However, after much wonderful guidance from my many interpretive and narrative thinking mentors, I realised that by the very inclusion of voices from the dominant discourses I could possibly be inadvertently undervaluing the knowledge of my participants. I debated whether to include it within the dissertation, or as an appendix. The former option was forgone as I decided that to even include this deconstruction, or by unpacking other ways of knowing, within the dissertation, there was a risk that the contents could conceal, or overshadow, the voices of orienteers.

Many people who had proof read my dissertation had said how insightful it was, to know, how many other schools of thought and disciplines might impact on a homicide experience, and how interesting it was to think about how each area might be constructed, and then what this might mean generally to orienteers. It is for this reason this is included as an appendix.

Disorientated

Following Kyle and Latisha's murders, I was suddenly in a world with a shattered belief system about death. Previously I believed old people died; parents before their children; and we die of natural causes such as old age or illness, at worst in an accident. My belief system had told me that fathers did not shoot their wives and children. If unthinkable they *did*, then I had thought that people and social institutions, would be kind, caring, and benevolent toward victims, and make their lives as comfortable as possible. It seemed that everything I believed was challenged by my experience of homicide.

I nearly drowned in all the new encounters that impacted on me. Let me tell you they were like the waves, suddenly with no warning some problem would appear, something that needed my attention, nearly knocking me off the tiny rock that I was clinging to as *my* piece of firm ground. Trying to understand the world was like riding a wave, you would just think you understood what a wave was, how it behaved and what to expect from one, then you would fall off again. My world felt like beach, thousands of tiny grains of sand, little pieces in no particular order, and the waves would crash down on me, with no regard for my fragmented state, they were powerful and strong, like many of the things, arising from the murders, that demanded my attention. I had no sense of fundamental knowing.

Janoff-Bulman (1992:5) identifies Parkes, 1975, Bowlby 1969, and Epstein 1984, as having explored the topic of 'our fundamental assumptions'. Concluding that despite numerous differing terminologies used,

it is generally accepted we rely on and are guided a ‘system of internal conceptions’ that are the bedrock of our conceptual system and we are often unaware of them and therefore likely to challenge them.

Most generally, at the core of our assumptive world are abstract beliefs about ourselves, the external world, and the relationship between the two. ... I propose that our three fundamental assumptions are:

The world is benevolent

The world is meaningful

The self is worthy

Of course, not everyone holds these basic assumptions; yet, it appears that most people do.

(Janoff-Bulman 1992:6)

Everything about these three core assumptions, and so many other beliefs, is challenged when one experiences the impact of homicide. Let us now look at some of the beliefs that are challenged and why.

The Human Night Time: Death in Australia and its construction

“Death is a part of life; there is no life without death.” (Doyle 1980:63).

One must preface this discussion with the fact that even the definitions of life and death are contentious (Lacy 1990:257). Each term can be defined according to different criteria and values. For example, think of the notions behind terms such as life support, legally dead, clinically dead, brain dead and comatose. Regrettably, discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Throughout this I will paper refer to death, as it relates to the clinical/legal death of someone. This discussion of death is broken down into two broad categories, **anticipated** and **unanticipated** death.

Contemporary Visions and descriptions of death

Kellerhear, (2000) in *Death and Dying in Australia*, “Australia’s first scholarly introduction to the central issues and experiences of death and loss...” (p. xvi) discusses death in Australia. (Chapter one of this book due to its relevance primarily informs this section of the literature review). It is almost impossible to define one stereotypically Australian portrayal of death. Rather there are a diverse number of images associated with the way Australians think of death. Images of death are associated with things such as ANZACS, SIDS, cancer, AIDS, natural disasters, and large-scale accidents. Kellerhear, (2000:2) points out that images of the genocide of Indigenous Australians are missing on this list. I would add, so to, be images of homicide (while some Australians might refer to situations of multiple homicides such as Port Arthur, very few would identify images of the homicide of an individual).

The Winds that Changed the Faces of death

Kellerhear goes on to discuss how the secularisation of death occurred because of the separation and reallocation of responsibilities related to death. He identifies that the establishment of the cause of death

passed from the church to medicine and law; as did the explanation for death; yet, the spiritual aspects of human consciousness suddenly had no fixed address as science broke death and life down into a series of physical processes. Death became a private, cold clinical, medical process, devoid of human emotion.

This was in fitting with the English culture, a major influence in Australia culture, of a “stiff upper lip, when it came to matter of sexuality and death” (p.8). Post WWII Australia began to be influenced by America, and in 1969, Kubler-Ross (1969) introduced the notion that the expression of grief was good and healthy. Kellerhear identifies other factors in the construction of death, as the (predominately American) visual images on television, in movies and books, of death as linked to random acts of violence. Death, in this medium, is often portrayed as temporary, with hero’s coming back to life. Grief is depicted as something resolved quickly so long as it is expressed and accompanied by grief counselling.

The final factor that Kellerhear discusses is that of the changing life expectancies of people, in developed countries, due to increasing awareness of health and the subsequent prevention of illness. In Australia the current life expectancy of males are 75 years and women 81 (Najman 2000:18). One can safely say that in contemporary Australia

Families infrequently experience death, but when these experiences are encountered, professionals services are brought in from outside the home to determine death, and to prepare and bury the deceased person. Personal exposure to death is low and death is now the experience of old people.
(Kellerhear 2000:10)

This resulted in three social developments (Kellerhear 2000:10). Firstly; there was a professionalisation and commodification of death. This gave rise to the second development, that families lacked intimate and experiential knowledge of what was normal in death and loss. Thirdly, social networks were ill equipped to deal with and support those who experienced death and loss. Street (2000:9) and Deveau (1995:55) assert “... despite the inroads that have been made in bringing the topic of death into the public domain, there still exists a death-denying culture in Western countries, with a silence surrounding death and a discomfort around the dying.”

In summary one might well say, that in Australia death is thought of as an anticipated event that happens when one is ‘old’ or ‘aged’, due to illness and as an event that will involve professionals. Many situations where death veers from this conception are considered traumatic, unanticipated (National Organisation of Victim Assistance 1985 Pt1:1).

Trauma and Sudden or Traumatic Death

In order to understand traumatic death one needs to know what trauma is. There are various meanings but it is generally accepted that trauma is constructed as in the following definition.

Trauma in contrast with stress, profoundly alters the basic structure not just of the individual, but of the cultural system as a whole: Society will never be the same again. Homeostatic mechanisms (e.g., ritual, social organizations, and the economic system) no longer suffice to restore a sense of safety and belonging, and other forms of organization or lack of organization need to take their place.
(De Vries 1996:401)

There are two dominant ways of make meaning of trauma (Shalev 1996; De Vries 1996; Scott 1992; Brown 1991). One school of thought, primarily those based in positivism, see trauma as being an individual's inability to cope with a sudden and unanticipated, yet normal life event. That is there is something within the person that sees they may not cope. The other idiom, the interpretist, makes sense of trauma as being a normal reaction to abnormal events. That is the event itself is why the individual may not cope. I make meaning of it as ““an overwhelming event” (Van der Kolk 1996) that renders one helpless and/or fearing for his/her life. Trauma breaks apart “ordinary ways of coping” (Terr, 1990) and is an event “that is outside the range of normal human experience that would be distressing to anyone.” (DSM-III),” (Grant 1999:1). One might question how likely is it that we will be affected by traumatic death?

Predicting Hurricanes: The Prevalence of Traumatic Death

Doyle states, “the probabilities are that the majority of us will die in a sudden, unexpected way, often traumatically” (Doyle 1980:63). Najman, (2000) Strang, (1996) and Ferrante, (1998) discuss Australian trends in violent death (motor vehicle accidents, suicides and homicides) as having remained relatively low and “stable over the last 20 years” (Strang 1996:1). Najman, (2000:300) illustrates that in Australia violent death declined between 1921 and 1997, however relative to changes in the causes of mortality, violent death accounts for an increasing percentage.

An interesting point for consideration (yet it cannot be explored here) related to this sector of mortality, is the notion of a positive correlation in the ebb and tide of suicide and homicide rates. Lunde, (1975 cited by Doyle 1980) examines how social construction of social failure and the subsequent locus of responsibility shifts over time and impacts on whether violence is directed inward (suicide) or outward (homicide).

Sudden death or traumatic deaths encompasses a variety of situations such as “suicide; homicide; auto, motorcycle, and plane accidents; drownings; industrial accidents; accidents by choking, haemorrhaging, overdoses; falling from great heights; and cardiovascular episodes” (Doyle 1980:63-64). I use ‘traumatic

death' to refer to accidental death, suicide, and homicide. Knowing how we construct death in Australia, what does trauma mean for our grieving processes?

(Sprang 1995:55) states that experts are beginning to recognise that a traumatic death produces indirect victims who suffer intense emotional trauma. Even so, there is little information available regarding the impact of a traumatic death on the psychological adjustment of the survivors.” The National Organisation of Victim Assistance (1985 Pt 1:2) and Rynearson (1995) discuss notions that this type of traumatic death intensifies and elongates the grief process and “need time and opportunity to transform their relationship to the deceased and to accommodate to a changed assumptive world.” (Romanoff 1998:708).

Grief – a process of adjustment

How do we grieve? Are there Australian ‘norms’ for grieving? There are many ways of grieving. There are as many ideas on what is healthy and unhealthy grief, as there are situations that are seen to give rise to grief. These include experiences such as losing one’s job, a relationship breakdown, moving house, and so on (National Association for Loss and Grief unknown), (Brown 1991). Throughout this paper, I will refer to grief and loss as it arises out of the death of someone significant (through *bereavement*).

There are many terms associated with the experiences of death; most common are grief, bereavement, and mourning. Adopting Stroebe, et al.’s (Stroebe, Stroebe & Hansson 1993:5) definition of these three terms as “*bereavement* is the objective situation of having lost someone significant; *grief* is the emotional response to one’s loss; and *mourning* denotes the actions and manner of expressing grief, which often reflects the mourning practices of one’s culture.” Bowlby and Parkes (cited by Redmond in (Dicks 1991:6) provide four helpful descriptive phases of the mourning process: 1) shock and numbness; 2) yearning and searching; 3) disorientation and disorganisation; and 4) resolution and reorganisation. There are many specific models to understand grief but none should be adopted before considering what ideological and value base they arise from.

Two schools of thought dominate this area (Street 2000; Stroebe 1999; Romanoff 1998). Overall, theorists agree that *grief* is the process of renegotiating how to live without someone to whom an individual has had a significant attachment (Stroebe 1999:198). However, some believe that the *grief process* is an individual’s private task, a chore, which must be done in order to ‘get over’ a death (Romanoff 1998), which grew out of the works of modernist theorists (Stroebe 1999:198). Street (2000:10-15) appears to suggest positivist bereavement models decontextualise the individual, and categorises their grief and mourning as normal or abnormal, in accordance to judgements about their physical and/or mental health reactions to stressful life events (stress models) or symptoms of an illness deemed to impair functioning (disease/medical Model).

Other theorists, are more holistic, and descriptive in their examinations of grief and mourning, taking into account, and considering the dynamic variables in individual's lives, such as other stressors, and the social and personal context of the bereavement. Theorists that assert the above come from the sociol-constructivist, symbolic interactionist, and the family systems schools of thought (for further discussion see Ibid and Dickinson 1994:4). "The post-modernist perspective suggests that there is no standard approach to assess this human experience" (Street 2000:12).

It is important when thinking of *mourning*, to note the earliest shift in theories relating to the *nature and expression of grief*, occurred globally and in Australia, as a result of Kubler-Ross's, 1969 identification of five stages of dying (denial, anger, depression, bargaining and adaptation) and grief. Prior to this, grief was not typically expressed publicly, especially not by English or Australian men (Kellerhear 2000:8). Given the public expression of grief is a relatively new development, it is little wonder one still encounters people with attitudes of private, unexpressed grief. It is useful to be aware of the insight we can gain through consulting and considering a wide number of models and theories, it is important that they are used eclectically in a post-modern way (Street 2000; Stroebe 1999; Sprang 1995).

It is important to note that grief is not a homogenous process, and that children experience grief too. There are many theories on the way loss is processed by children and young adults. It is outside the scope of this dissertation to explore it in detail.

Grief and Traumatic death combined

"Traditionally the process of grief has been understood relative to attributes such as: (a) relationship of the bereaved to the deceased; (b) age of the deceased; and (c) personal characteristics of the survivors" (Sprang 1995:3). These understandings of grief and mourning have in the last twenty to thirty years been increasingly criticised for not adequately explaining the experiences and behaviours of people bereaved through less prominent, or traumatic *modes or contexts* of death (Street 2000; Harrison 2000; Stroebe 1999; Sprang 1995; National Organisation of Victim Assistance 1985). Trauma is said to impact on the grieving process in several ways. Take the following passage on traumatic death and its impact on childhood grieving.

Trauma (and traumatic death) includes several elements that preclude processing. Eth and Pynoos (1985:175, cited in Johnson 1998:134) list five such elements:

1. Reminiscing may be inhibited because images of the trauma associated with memories of the person may interfere. The funeral, photographs, or compensatory play often assist in repairing the image of the deceased.
2. Feelings of guilt over conflicts in loyalty, accountability and survival may inhibit grief processing. Inner plans of action to offset feelings of helplessness may result in self-blame.

3. Trauma can cause ego constriction when the child shuns intense emotion, narrows life choices, and develops cognitive difficulties. A cognitive style of forgetting may evolve.
4. Social stigma from the event may cause the family to respond by prohibiting reference to the person lost, which forces silence, and blocks processing.
5. The traumatic memories can intensify fantasies of reunion and confound them with images of violence. This can make normal loss and related depression overwhelming and can result in helplessness.

In the case of grief compounded by trauma, the traumatic anxiety and other symptoms must be dealt with first in order to allow grief processing to commence. (Johnson 1998:135-159).

Trauma and Homicide related grief

Brown (Brown 1991:188) suggests that due to continual interruptions post-homicide related grief may last on average up to five years, in comparison to a two-year average from non-traumatic forms of death. Cultural grieving rituals can be interrupted by factors such as an autopsy in homicides (Harrison 2000:31; Smith 2000:12). For example, Hindu's traditionally have no contact with outsiders during the mourning process, Muslims require that burials occur the day after death, or Jewish practice is to bury their loved ones on the same day (Smith 2000:12). One might well summarise that when a death is the result of a homicide, that there can be interruptions and complications that compound and elongate the grieving processes.

Discovering new territories

Global increases in the amount of attention, publicity, and research that focus on the plight and voices of victims of crime parallel, or perhaps even result from, recent shifts in grief and trauma theories and approaches. These shifts may have challenged the perspective from which dominant discourses such as law and order, medicine and science view bereavement, grief, and loss, particularly that which arises out of a crime. Voices of individuals affected by rape, domestic violence, incest, childhood abuse, and homicide are gradually occupying a legitimate public space and place to be heard, and subsequently legitimate rights to support services. This is evident with the introduction of victim impact statements and services that address the specific needs of these populations.

Tracing the trail of Victims of Crime Movements

In order to understand the history of the victims of crime movements it is necessary to understand the contemporary construction of crime and the inherent modernist notions of victims and of justice (noting this is the broadest of broad overviews). Please note that given crime is a positivist legal construction there are clear, precise and exact definitions, which although regularly contested via adversarial legal systems on the basis of philosophical values, when used inappropriately publicly, can have legal implications and ramifications for a speaker.

Crime

Commonly we differentiate between wrongdoing, misdemeanour, and crime. All refer to socially unacceptable behaviour, and if placed on a continuum; wrongdoings are at the lesser end, 'misdemeanour' centred, and at the extreme end 'crime.' I will focus on crime. Within crime, there are a variety of classifications and distinctions, which we will now look at.

Crime and How Society Categorises It

In Australian society, crime is accepted as being a behaviour that is legitimately punishable through use of retributive legal sanctions (laws) that are underpinned by adherence to certain philosophical values (Schonsheck 1994; Lacy 1990; Shute 1993; Ellis 1993). Crime is different from a wrongdoing, as the latter does not impact on or have long-term negative consequences for an individual or a community sector.

There are numerous classifications of crime. Broadly speaking they can be divided into four categories, relative to against what, or whom they are perpetrated. Those crimes perpetrated against property; an individual (people); against humanity; and those against the environment.

Justice, is there such a thing?

When we think of crime in Australia, we think of our retributive system of justice. The concept of justice has many definitions and framings, which goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. The following definition speaks of the many forms of justice, and offers some explanation as to why many people feel, that there is no justice or that it is not properly administered.

[There] ...are various kinds of justice - social, political, economic, moral and legal- of which legal is only one though it touches and is touched by justice in all its aspects. ...However precisely these principles and rules may be defined, their application will depend upon the facts of the particular case and will, in many areas, involve an exercise of discretion.
(Law Reform Commission of Western Australia 1999:4)

This brings us to the point of considering, what would be justice in the situation of a homicide? Is the retributive extreme of an eye for an eye still valid in Australian thinking? Even if this extreme concept of justice is enacted, what does this do for homicide victims or their families? Historically how have these issues been dealt with, and how are they dealt with today?

The languages and history of human killing

Again, within the scope of this dissertation, I can only provide a brief overview. Pike in 1873 (1873) traced the history of homicide, the killing of one human being by another, through the changes in civilisation, stating that:

The history of human thought with respect to homicide can thus be traced continuously from it's starting pointing savage live, through the earliest forms of civilisation, through the

conflict of ideas which arose when trade and letters asserted their rights to exist against private and public wars, and robbery, and ignorance, through all our political convulsions, down to the present day of security and refinement.
(Pike 1873:135)

He illustrates how the ancient Romans had contexts in which homicide was acceptable (as per order of the Emperor) such as in the Gladiators arena. Paradoxically outside of this arena, homicide was “regarded by certain ancient writers in Rome with almost as much horror as by ourselves in England at this present time [1873]” (1873:12-13). Following this era Pike tells how the ‘barbarians’ thought of homicide as a lesser crime than that of theft. Interestingly retribution was made by paying a fine either in coin or livestock, which went to aggrieve the relatives of the deceased.

It appears that the term murder developed around the time English society was shifting from feudal to representative democratic systems of governance. Duhaime (1994) tells how the concept of unlawful homicide, and trial by peers developed and were encompassed in the:

Magna Carta [a] Charter to which subscribed King John of England on June 12, 1215 in which a basic set of limits were set on the King's powers. King John had ruled tyrannically. His barons rebelled and committed themselves to war with King John unless he agreed to the Charter. Held to be the precursor of *habeas corpus* as Article 39 of the *Magna Carta* held that no man (sic) shall be "imprisoned, exiled or destroyed ... except by lawful judgment of his (sic) peers or by the law of the land.
(Duhaime 1994).

Jumping to contemporary Australia where we are governed by a representative democratic nation state, which in conjunction with the judiciary, overseas the many areas of civil law and common law, this system derived from our English origins (see (Bates 1996) for further discussion). Contemporary medical advances have seen that where life even starts is a contentious issue, one that needs answering/defining before we can ascertain if someone or something has caused it to end (Nash 1986; Devine 1978). Who has the right to decide both of the above answers, and in accordance to what criteria – the quality, quantity, or viability of a life? There are varied competing and vocal opinions as to the numerous answers to these questions, but they are not up for further discussion here. For the purpose of this paper, homicide refers to the taking of a human life (one that's definition is not considered contentious (i.e. commonly accepted as living) by another human being, be it through lawful or unlawful actions (Ferrante 1998; Sullivan 1997; Ellis 1993; Nash 1986; Devine 1978).

Homicide is a generic term for killing; it can encapsulate and replace all other terms. It absorbs all situations – regardless of success or failure of legal sanctions. It is void of legal notions of intent, context, balance of probability or beyond reasonable doubt which all come into play when considering a homicide situation in a court of law. One might very well note that the term ‘homicide’ is very clinical, palatable and far less emotive than the term ‘**murder**’. Murder is a legal term that can only be applied to an

individual accused of unlawful homicide once they have been tried and found guilty in a court of law. To refer to someone, who has not been proved, as a murderer is to risk being sued for defamation or slander. It is for this reason that I must state this dissertation employs both terms (homicide and murder) as colloquially appropriate, yet in a manner that does not denote that an individual has been found guilty of murder in a court of law.

Our current legal system and social sanctions impinge on many aspects of our lives, even things such as our freedom of expression. This can be frustrating for all those involved in crime (the perpetrator - alleged or guilty, and the victim/s). Let us now look at how, the positivist, and exclusionary nature of, the modernist 'Western' construct of law and order, gave rise to all victims of crime having to fight in order to claim the right to be included and considered as an active participant (The Ministry of Justice 1997:1-2).

Caution around language

As I accept and espouse post- modern and constructivist theories that language shapes our individual and local realities I am compelled to define for the reader the way in which I use certain terms. (I would like to explore in greater detail all the terminology in this dissertation, however it is not possible, so I will restrict my dialogue to those that have the strongest impact on my reality, and will possibly add any that come up in later discussions.)

I feel I must acknowledge and discuss the notions of Becker's labelling theories. These theories state that "the process where socially defined identities are imposed or adopted, especially the deviant label. Such labels may have consequences that trap the individual into that identity." (Bilton et al. 1996:626). Labels help to create identities that people may come to live out, as a form of "self fulfilling prophecy" (Ibid: 459). If the label that an individual is given has some negative aspect, of being socially unacceptable, it can then result in exclusion "...from the normal social interaction[s]" (Ibid). My attention to language is based theoretically and personally.

My first realisations of the importance of language were when I realized how sensitive to and acutely aware of violent language I became. Common phrases could be extremely upsetting; others have also identified this as a sensitive area.

I vividly remember taking offence, when introduced as a 'victim', thinking that people thought I was solely comprised of this one event. This led me to think about the way I spoke about other people. When I use the term 'victims', I do not use it with the intent of implying that people are consistently victims. I base my use of the term, on the notion that victimisation is a process, that allows for the possibility of change. Experiencing long lasting lifestyle changes, can mean emotional fluctuations

between being a victim and a survivor. There has been debate in theoretical circles about which term to apply to who and when (Andrews 1992).

Victims

Generally the term “victim is used to refer to one who is injured destroyed or sacrificed under any of various conditions, such as illness, accident or crime” (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1999). Within this context, it will refer to those that suffer as the result of a crime, be that perpetrated against them directly or indirectly.

The ramifications and aftermath of crime create many ripples, which results in the crime having an impact on a number of people (Mawby 1994:33), Warner, 1992, and (Karmen 1996). It is widely accepted that a **primary victim** is the person most directly or obviously, affected or harmed by a crime, for example a bank teller who is held up. Other tellers and customers in the bank would also be primary victims, as they were present, however, they may not be readily acknowledged as such. A **‘primary homicide victim’** is therefore an individual killed by another human, (legally their death must occur as a direct result of the injuries sustained and within one year of the offence).

There are also those who are indirectly affected by a crime the **secondary victims**, such as family members of the above tellers and customers, who were not there, but who may have to deal with the ramifications of the events. It is widely accepted that family members within a two-generation radius of a primary homicide victim are **‘secondary homicide victim’**.

Alternately, you have people who are not necessarily in relationships that are close emotionally or physically to the primary victim but who are none-the-less affected by a crime. This could include acquaintances, emergency service workers, and people providing support. People in this situation are **tertiary victims**. An example is a person, who irons the clothes for Mrs Smith, may be affected emotionally or psychologically by the fact, Mrs Smith was raped in her own home last week. The ironing person may change their behaviours around personal security and that of family members. Even in tangible ways they may well be disadvantaged, for instance if they lost the ironing income for a number of weeks, while Mrs Smith recovered. Even professionals such as police, counsellors, and so forth can fit into this category. Likewise, the associates of a primary homicide victim are **‘tertiary homicide victims’**.

It is important to note, (although it is not up for further discussion here), that within a popular construction of ‘victims,’ there are inherent notions of deserving and non-deserving victims (Andrews 1992:2-4), in accordance to those deemed to play a part in their demise. This is evident when we look at the legal defence of provocation (Nash 1986). Some say that this concept was built on by one stream of victimology (see Karmen 1996 Chapter 3; Mawby 1994 for further discussion).

Alternative ways of seeing victims

Alternative terminology's that allow for fluctuation, and self-identification, of context, exist; we just need to see them. For example during discussions with Smith (2000), a police officer experienced in working with post-homicide families, we bantered around the notion that people who lost loved ones through homicide immediately become an 'orienteer.' We concluded this, as they have to learn to negotiate their way through a completely new landscape. One that often includes, new terrain, of the police, the coronial system, the court system, the parole system, the medical system, the deceased estate legal system, superannuation laws, and so on. Alternately they may not encounter any of these systems other than the police, as their loved one may be missing presumed murdered. In such cases, people have to orientate themselves to learning to live, in the absence of any, even unfamiliar, systems. By continuing to breathe and survive, secondary homicide victims become 'conquering orienteers'.

Whatever the (circumstances and) particulars orienteers must quickly learn to adapt and survive. The inherent sense or image that the term *orienteer* conjured in our minds was one of mastering new skills and surviving in hostile or foreign terrains, often in situations without maps or recognisable landmarks, so the word *orienteer* fitted well for us. Where it lends itself well to the text, I will utilise the term orienteer, however dominant associations, or common language styles, may overshadow its use.

References to personal experiences

'Story' or 'stories' are dominant terms in the field of narrative research. Used to refer to people's life stories, the scripts that they express – verbally, orally, or written - as being their lives, or experiences. I have difficulty in using the terms possibly as a result of my exposure to the media and having 'stories' written about me, and the responses of "oh I never thought I would meet you" from strangers when they meet me imply an inherent notions of fiction. It is for this reason that I may at times use the terms 'individual reality' or 'local realities' in place of 'story' or 'stories.' I value and when it feels right employ the narrative use of the term and concept of 'stories' that is the way White, (1992 cited in Riessman 1993:65) defines them:

The stories that persons live by are rarely, if ever, "radically constructed" - it is not a matter of them being made-up, "out of the blue," so to speak. Our culturally available and appropriate stories about personhood and about relationships have been historically constructed and negotiated in communities of persons, and within the context of social structures and institutions.

Make note that when referring to primary homicide victims I use the term 'loved one', I acknowledge there are instances in which people will be dealing with the loss of a person through homicide, however

they may not necessarily think of them as either their loved one or friend. I do not mean to offend anyone with my terminology but would rather use terms that are not clinical or cold.

Orienteer's positioning on the landscape of homicide

Contemporary

In 1994, at the second reading of the Victims Of Crime Bill, the then Attorney General Hon. Cheryl Edwards, "acknowledged the feelings of neglect and frustration among victims about a system that in their view gave 'too little recognition to the harm which they [victims of crime] have suffered and which has been too heavily weighted toward the prosecution, sentencing and attempted rehabilitation of people who break the law.'" (The Ministry of Justice 1997:1). She went on to say

Historically, the alienation of victims from the criminal justice system may be viewed as a consequence of the manner in which the justice system has evolved. Our contemporary system of criminal justice... is founded on the fundamental tenet that the State is responsible for the protection and enforcement of the rights of its citizens. Accordingly, crimes against the individual are dealt with as crimes against the State. This system has the advantages of ensuring equal application of the law to all citizens, the implementation of appropriate and consistent prosecuting and sentencing philosophies, and the avoidance of possible conflicts between the view of the victim and the community. However, it also largely excludes the victim from having a role, as a victim, in the justice process since the essential parties to the process are the offender and the State. (Emphasis in original, Ibid.)

Historically

The above is ironic, as Pike, in 1873 (p. 42) asserted that "the significance of relatives have been recognised by every nation or tribe which the earliest history has been transmitted to us." It begs the question of 'at what point in history did the relatives of homicide victims get lost?' Was it a result of White Anglo Saxon societies, such as Australia developing into centrally governed industrialised nations? On the other hand, did it stem from changes in values, from health to wealth that accompanied the change from feudalism to capitalism? Was it related to the fragmentation of 'family' that came with industrialisation? Was it a by-product of the state taking a more active role in the 'efficient and expedient' (cost effective) distribution of justice? How and why did rediscovery occur, who even raised the issue?

What role has the creation of a United Nations Charter of Human Rights had in re-identification? What influence did the genocide of Jews in WWII have, did the acknowledgement of the holocaust victims play a role in 'victims' beginning to receive public attention again? There are many possibilities.

Mawby and Walklate's (1994:67-94) discussion of "The Rebirth of the Victim as a Significant Actor" suggests that, the power relations that came under attack in the first wave of feminism, and subsequent debates, gave rise to what now forms an integral part of the contemporary discourse of post-modernist thinkers. This power analysis leads one to question if perhaps Pike's, 1873, historical account, (given its date) did not consider the role of power in defining who was a victim. One wonders if minority groups

(women and indigenous peoples) successful demands for the right to have citizenship, and hold positions of power, has facilitated an increase in requests by victims of crime to have a voice in the criminal justice system.

How have orienteers claimed a space and place as their own?

One cannot answer this without looking at the broader context in which voices have been both found and heard. Karmen (1996) in his discussion identifies the history of victimology (the scientific study of victims relationships to, the criminal; the criminal justice system (society); and the impact of crime on victims) as beginning in 1941, (see for Ibid:14 for a succinct time line). Mawby and Walklate, (1994) and Karmen (1996) discuss the various ideologies within victimology. Victimology grew out of criminology, because of desire to scientifically identify and define relationships and responsibility between the criminal, society and the victim.

Outside the scientific arena, contributions to the identification and commentary of victims came out of the civil rights movements of the sixties, the second wave of feminism in the seventies, and the anti-racist ideologies and practices of the eighties. Currently all still contribute to the debate, dialogue, and analyse the role, position, agendas, and power of communities within society.

Broadly speaking two dominant schools of thought evolved within victimology, those that believe that there is a shared responsibility between the victim and the perpetrator for a crime (victims are seen as contributing to their fate), and those that believe responsibility rests solely with the perpetrator (victims are innocent bystanders) (Karmen 1996). Espoused conceptions of the roles and rights of, the state, the perpetrator and the victim/s, are dependent on the ideology to which one subscribes.

Prior to the seventies and eighties, 'experiences' from the perspective of the marginalised had rarely been told. Those who had experienced crimes such domestic violence, rape, childhood abuse, homicide, or genocide began to have a public profile and voice. Mediums from which they could be heard or seen included newspapers, magazine articles; talk back radio, and autobiographical books/ publications. Media portrayals of such things are repeatedly accompanied by sensationalist writing styles, graphic often-insensitive images with little or no control (editing rights) going to a cooperating victim/orienteer.

Even as groups of orienteers form self-help groups and lobbying organisations, their perspectives are still predominately filtered through the eyes and agenda of others, be it for political or economic gain. This is evident when one observes the abundance of literature from the media and government papers, and commercial publishers. Internationally, nationally and locally there have been instances where orienteers have been successful in putting their needs onto the political agenda and gaining some small recognition via the implementation of new charters, rights and organisational protocols and procedures.

Karmen (1996:xxii-xxiii) interestingly needs to labels these groups 'victimists' - "those that believe they and their fellow group members have been severely harmed by some other group or by an unfair system of roles and relationships." This reminds me of a quotation "if you do not want to understand someone label them." (Parry 1994)

The local weather forecast

Orienteers, when given the opportunity, identify homicide as being:

...one of the most difficult experiences anyone ever has to face. Part of what makes it so difficult is that few people know what it's like, and many don't want to talk about it so they go through the pain relatively alone, wondering if their feelings and reactions are normal and whether they will ever find meaning in life again.
(Parents of Murdered Children, in Dicks, 1991:27)

Whent (1991:356) summaries what happens to a family when a murder is discovered.

1. The media will examine their lives and any family indiscretions are likely to be brought to the surface and published.
2. A Major Investigation Murder Inquiry will be launched. This is something over which the family have absolutely no control. They will only get information that the police think fit to divulge.
3. They often have a total lack of information of what happens next and what they should do, or can do.
4. They have an inability to bury their loved one for, sometimes, several months.
5. They have to contend with their personal grief and the family trauma which often can manifest itself in one member of the family blaming the other, suggesting that if they had collected their loved one this would not have happened

Orienteers say that homicide is an experience that is accompanied by so many emotions, and instances of intrusion, over which they have no control. Burgess (1975, cited in Lee 1996:6) reports "families felt intense anger and resentment toward the media for ... intrusion into their private lives and grief." Intrusion by police and the criminal justice system complicates the grieving process for survivors (Harrison 2000; Rhydderch 1998; Lee 1996).

Orienteers identify the factors, which may impact on the way in which families, and individuals will experience homicide, as including but not limited to the following list.

- ❖ The place and manner in which notification occurs,
- ❖ If they have somewhere to go if they can not return to the home,
- ❖ If they are suspected of being the perpetrator,
- ❖ How much information they receive,
- ❖ If information is honest and accurate (many people latter find they have been told euphemistic information),
- ❖ If they knew when and what processes they were able to be involved in,
- ❖ The manner in which the media portrays the family and their loved one/s,
- ❖ Community gossip and speculation,

- ❖ If they witness the event and/or the crime scene,
- ❖ If the perpetrator is dead, imprisoned or at large,
- ❖ If the perpetrator is known or unknown to the family and or victim,
- ❖ The outcome of criminal justice proceedings, and
- ❖ Continuity of supports offered to them during and post criminal justice processes.
(Harrison 2000; Rhydderch 1998; Lee 1996; Beresford 1996; Scerri 1995; Whent 1991).

Orienteers suggest support needs to be tailored to each family members individual needs and context. Support may be expected to come from a variety of sources, formal, informal, professional and para-professionals (self- help, volunteers). Orienteers identified acknowledgement, respect, and having equal access (same as perpetrators) to services when required, as being crucial elements of support.

The barrage and multiplicity of factors can create a perplexing, pervasive, overwhelming, and traumatic experience that “ends ones implicit trust in the goodness of the world” (NOVA cited in Dicks 1991:30) and often sees that many orienteers feel like they are going mad, and “experience feelings of sadness and despair that last can a life time” (Rhydderch 1998). It is often an isolating experience as “there are times when even the most expressive words fail to adequately describe a person’s experience – the wound is too deep, too raw, and too painful.” (Muir 1998).

During this storm in spite of the hail of judgements, the flood of tears and sadness, the tidal wave of intrusions, and the gale force winds of change, orienteers manage to find a map of hope, to make meaning of the landscape and weather conditions, and often go on to give weather forecasts to new orienteers.