

EXPERIENCES OF WIDOWHOOD AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE MOURNING PROCESS OF THE BATSWANA PEOPLE

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This study is dedicated to my late grandmother MONYADIWA ELIZABETH MOKHONOANA who spent most of her life as a widow and who's trust in GOD continues to be my source of inspiration.

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SUMMARY

The loss of a partner seems to be considered as more serious than that of a parent or child, because of the closeness of the relationship between a wife and husband. In the South African context, widowhood is often a complicated experience because of the various beliefs and traditions within different communities. In this study the focus will be on the Batswana people. Widowhood and mourning in the Batswana context seems to be influenced by culture which contributes to stress. Part of this culture is the wearing of mourning clothes, suspension from attending gatherings, visiting other households, and other social activities which isolate the widow. Isolation also occurs due to the belief that she may contaminate other people with bad luck. It seems therefore that the widow lacks support from the community. It also seems that her experience of the mourning process and the community's beliefs are not consistent, thus predisposing her to possible poor mental health. This research was motivated by the mentioned awareness of the researcher as well as government's plight of the promotion of women's health.

The purpose of this research was to explore the Batswana widows' experience of widowhood as well as the community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process. From these findings it was possible to formulate guidelines for the facilitation of the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to support the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

The research is qualitative, explorative and descriptive. For data collection open ended questions were used to conduct in depth phenomenological interviews with widows, and a semi structured interview schedule to interview community members. Purposive voluntary sampling was used to identify participants in Mafikeng, Lichtenburg and Zeerust in the North West Province in South Africa. Entry was gained through written permission from the chiefs, headmen or councillors of the areas stated above. Data saturation was reached after interviewing eight widows and seven community members. Data analysis was done by means of combined techniques by Giorgi and Tesch. The researcher and co-coder reached consensus in a meeting organised for this purpose.

The findings of research resulted in five major categories namely, the Batswana widows' experience of isolation due to stigmatization of widowhood, stressful life due to customs prescribed by society, hopelessness as a result of the loss of the husband, support provided by the internal and external support systems, and a sense of over-responsibility due to absence of the partner. The community members' beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process culminated into four major categories namely, perceptions about the effects of the mourning process, the beliefs of the Batswana customs that the widow has to follow, the need to support the widow and, the widow's mourning process as discrimination against women.

Conclusions reached are that widows seem to experience extreme isolation and stigmatization and that the mourning process is very stressful due to the Batswana customs. Because of some community beliefs, the widow seems also discriminated against, which leads to further isolation and loneliness. It seems that the majority of community members value cultural practices and that it is important for the widow to follow these in order to protect herself and the community.

Recommendations are made for nursing education, nursing research and psychiatric nursing practice, with specific guidelines formulated for psychiatric nurses to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

[Core terms : widow, widowhood, mourning process, experience, belief, community]

OPSOMMING

Om 'n lewensmaat aan die dood af te staan blyk ernstiger uitwerking op die agtergeblewene te hê as wanneer die verlies aan 'n ouer of kind ervaar word. Dit kan toegeskryf word aan die noue samesyn wat normaalweg tussen man en vrou bestaan.

In die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks is weduweeskap dikwels 'n komplekse ervaring as gevolg van n verskeidenheid van gelowe en tradisies binne die verskillende gemeenskappe. Dit blyk dat die Batswana weduwees dikwels spanning ervaar as gevolg van kultureelverwante invloede.

Volgens tradisie moet die Batswana weduwee, onder andere, rouklere dra, wegbly van plekke waar mense vergader, geen besoeke by ander huishoudings aflê nie en sosiale aktiwiteite vermy. Die gevolg hiervan is dat die weduwee in isolasie leef. Verdere isolering vind ook plaas as gevolg van die oortuiging dat sy ander mense met haar swak geluk kan kontamineer. Dit blyk dat die weduwee dus die gemeenskap se ondersteuning misloop. Dit wil ook voorkom dat haar ervaring van die rouproses en die gemeenskap se gelowe nie konstant is nie, en dit kan tot swak geestesgesondheid aanleiding gee. Die motief vir hierdie navorsing berus op die navorser se bewustheid van genoemde aspekte en neem ook die regering se standpunt om die gesondheid van die vrou te bevorder, in ag.

Die doel van hierdie navorsing was om die Batswana weduwee se ervaring van weduweeskap te ondersoek. Dit sluit ook die gemeenskap se sienings in verband met weduweeskap en die rouproses in. Volgens die bevindinge was dit moontlik om riglyne te identifiseer en sodoende die fasilitering en bevordering van ondersteuningsmeganismes in die gemeenskap uit te brei sodat die weduwee gedurende weduweeskap en die rouproses so goed as moontlik bygestaan kan word.

Die navorsing is kwalitatief, verkennend en beskrywend van aard. Met die oog op dataversameling is gebruik gemaak van oop-einde vrae vir die fenomenologiese onderhoude met weduwees en ook 'n semi-gestruktureerde skedule vir onderhoude met lede van die gemeenskap. 'n Doelmatige vrywillige toetsgroep is saamgestel uit

deelnemers van Mafikeng, Lichtenburg en Zeerust, almal woonagtig in die Noordwes Provinsie in Suid-Afrika. Toestemming is verkry deur geskrewe aansoeke aan die hoofmanne of raadgewers in die betrokke areas te rig.

Dataversadiging is bereik nadat met agt weduwees en sewe gemeenskapslede onderhoude gevoer is. Data-ontleding het plaasgevind aan die hand van 'n kombinasie van tegnieke deur Giorgi en Tesch. Die navorser en medekodeerder het eenstemmigheid bereik na afloop van 'n vergadering wat vir hierdie doel belê was.

Volgens bevindinge was dit moontlik om vyf hoofkategorieë te identifiseer, naamlik die Batswana weduwee se ervaring van isolasie te wyte aan die stigmatisering van die weduwee, die gespanne bestaan as gevolg van die gewoontes en tradisies wat deur die gemeenskap voorgeskryf word, die gevoel van hulpeloosheid as gevolg van die verlies van die man, die moontlike ondersteuning deur interne en eksterne ondersteuningstelsels, en die gevoel van oorverantwoordelikheid te wyte aan die afwesigheid van die lewensmaat. Die gemeenskap se sienings in verband met weduweeskap en die rouproses het gekulmineer in vier hoofkategorieë, naamlik waarnemings met betrekking tot die uitwerking van die rouproses, die oortuigings eie aan die Batswana mense wat voorskriftelik is en deur die weduwee nagevolg moet word, die noodsaaklikheid van ondersteuning aan die weduwee en die feit dat die rouproses as diskriminerend teenoor die vrou beskou kan word.

Die gevolgtrekkings waartoe gekom is, dui daarop dat die weduwees klaarblyklik ergere isolasie en stigmatisering ervaar, en dat die voorgeskrewe rouproses vir Batswanavroue spanning tot gevolg het. Na aanleiding van sommige gemeenskaps-beskouings, blyk dit dat die weduwee voel dat daar teen haar gediskrimineer word en dit gee tot verdere uitsluiting en eensaamheid aanleiding. Dit blyk ook dat kulturele praktyke deur die meerderheid van die lede van die gemeenskap positief waardeur word en dat dit vir die weduwee belangrik is om die voorskrifte en gebruike na te volg om sodoende haarself en haar gemeenskap te beskerm.

Aanbevelings wat gemaak word, is gerig op verpleegonderwys, verpleegnavorsing en die praktyk van psigiatriese verpleegkunde. Spesifieke riglyne vir psigiatriese

verpleging word geformuleer, met besondere verwysing na die fasilitering en ontwikkeling van ondersteuningsmeganismes in die gemeenskap om sodoende die weduwee te ondersteun tydens haar weduweeskap en die rouproses.

(Kernkonsepte : weduwee, weduweeskap, rouproses, belewenis, waarde, gemeenskap)

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Several authors such as Littlewood (1992:148) and Mendes de Leon, Kasl and Jacobs (1994:615) seem to agree that the concept of widowhood involves a multiple loss that could include the loss of a confidante as well as a social and sexual partner. The loss of a partner is viewed as more serious than that of a parent or child, because of the closeness of the relationship between a wife and husband. This loss is, however, an individualistic experience that may be different for each widow, depending on the degree of her closeness to her lost partner and the circumstances that led to his death (Littlewood, 1992:48). Some widows may experience loneliness which may result in depressive symptoms such as dysphoric moods, sadness, hopelessness and worthlessness. Others consider widowhood as a transitional phase that they have to experience at one stage of their lives (Littlewood, 1992:149; Mendes de Leon et al., 1994:163; Potash, 1986:159).

In 1990 Flint (1990:11) said that a wife could expect to survive a husband of her own age by four years. This leaves most women more susceptible to spending their final years as widows. To aggravate the situation in South Africa black men are, since the early nineties especially, vulnerable to die as they are exposed to political and taxi violence. The latter has claimed the lives of many taxi owners and drivers (Makhamedzha, 1998:18). This leads to an increase in the number of widows and the subsequent rise in the incidence of widowhood with its attendant difficulties such as social isolation, single parenthood and being stigmatized by society (Mendes de Leon et al., 1994:614).

In the South African context, widowhood is often a complicated experience because of the various beliefs and traditions within different communities. Evidence of what happens to widows came up during one of the Felicia Mabuza-Suttle's TV Talk shows flighted early in 1997, on SABC 1. Widows interviewed in the show expressed among other considerations, their frustrations of being blamed by relatives for having killed their

late husbands so as to enjoy their estates. Some complained of being isolated and discriminated against because of the beliefs mentioned above, which cause guilt feelings to the widow. The Felicia Mabuza-Suttle Talk show revealed some of the community's beliefs about the widow in mourning and also the general lack of support that these widows experienced.

The problems associated with widowhood are further aggravated by the widow's experience of the mourning process. This process is described by Schut, Stroebe, Van den Bout and de Keijser (1997:63), as a four task process which a person experiences. Firstly, to come to terms with the loss; secondly to go through the pain of grief; thirdly, to adjust to the environment in which the dead person is missing and fourthly, to find a way to move on with life.

The widow in the Batswana context forms the focus of this study. She experiences certain rituals during the mourning process which amount to discrimination. Amongst these is the wearing of black clothing so as to be distinguishable, so that men will not approach her for a sexual relationship. She is not expected to attend public gatherings like church services, parties, weddings and funerals. She is not allowed to visit friends, relatives and neighbours for a certain period of time, ranging between one to twelve months during widowhood and the mourning process. She should be home by sunset. It is believed that by coming home after sunset she may be a threat to other people by way of affecting their health (Pauw, 1990:76). This often causes guilt feelings for the widow resulting in her experiencing the mourning process negatively. The mourning process for the Batswana widows also involves undergoing a cleansing process which involves the taking of herbs. These herbs are also used to wash herself. She could furthermore be expected to shave off the hair on her head to prevent her from contaminating other people (Pauw, 1990:80).

The threat of contaminating other people exists because the widow lives among a community of people who hold certain beliefs about the mourning process. Some of the beliefs are that she may have been responsible for her husband's death. She may also be accused of not having cared enough for her late husband (Littlewood, 1992:115). These beliefs differ according to a community's culture, or its social or educational

status. Some of the cultural beliefs are that she may pose a threat to the community in the sense that she may affect their livestock, small babies and pregnant women. If one crosses the widow's tracks, one may become sick due to 'contamination'. It is for this reason that she is not supposed to move around in the village (Pauw, 1990:76).

The consequential behaviour becomes evident when the widow is turned away by taxi drivers for fear that commuters' lives will be threatened. This behaviour by society is aggravated by her black clothing, which the community associates with bad luck (Ngwezi, 1977:84). She is thus isolated and lacks support which, according to Parkes and Weiss (1983:17), is important to assist her in order to cope with widowhood and the mourning process.

Being a psychiatric nurse and a black woman myself, my interest and concern were stimulated in terms of these conditions and this led to my further investigation of this topic. My subjective experience as a woman within the Batswana community, is that widows seem not to get the necessary support from individuals like friends, relatives, neighbours and the broader community. I also realised that because of the evident discrimination and the isolation that the widow encounters, her experience of the mourning process and the community's beliefs are not consistent, thus predisposing her to possible poor mental health. I was further motivated to explore this situation since the South African government, within its 1994 publication of the National Health Policy (ANC, 1994:44), mentions the need to promote women's health in general. In view of the above mentioned problems of the widow and her experience of widowhood and the mourning process, the following research questions arise:

1. What is the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process?
2. What is the Batswana community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process?
3. What can psychiatric nurses do to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process?

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Based on the above mentioned questions, this research project aims at the following objectives:

- 1.2.1 To explore and describe the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process.
- 1.2.2 To explore and describe the Batswana community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process, and
- 1.2.3 To formulate guidelines for psychiatric nurses in order to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

1.3 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

The following metatheoretical, theoretical and methodological statements define the paradigmatic perspectives and parameters within which the researcher will conduct this research project.

1.3.1 Metatheoretical statements

The Nursing for the Whole Person Theory (Oral Roberts University : Anna Vaughn School of Nursing, 1990:136 - 142) which is based on a Judeo-Christian philosophy, as well as other philosophies and theories that use the old and the new testaments of the Bible as the truth, form the grounding of the metatheoretical statements of this research.

These theories are adopted because of their congruence with the researcher's philosophy and that of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. Though these statements guide the study, they are not testable. The following metatheoretical statements are defined; person, mental health, environment and nursing.

1.3.1.1 Person

A unique human being created in the image of God, and functioning in an integrated bio-psycho-social manner in his quest for wholeness. A person in the fullest sense is someone who interacts holistically with his external environment.

The Batswana widows are viewed holistically, in interaction with the Batswana community with regard to widowhood and the mourning process. In this study, the term person refers to the widow and the members of the community. When referring to the widow, "she" will be used and when referring to the community, "he", "him", and "his" is used although the female gender could also be used in order to indicate the community. When the community is referred to in the plural form, "they" and "them" will be used .

1.3.1.2 Mental health

Mental health is an integral part of health in general, and it refers to a state of being in which a person is simultaneously successful at working, loving, and resolving conflicts by coping and adjusting to the recurrent stresses of everyday living (Uys & Middleton, 1997:745).

Every mentally healthy individual has the potential of becoming mentally ill and every mentally ill individual has the potential of becoming mentally healthy.

In this study the focus is on the mental health of the Batswana widow. This could be influenced by her own experience of the Batswana community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process.

1.3.1.3 Environment

This term includes the internal and the external environment of the widow. The internal environment comprises the physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of the widow's life whereas the external environment includes the physical, social and spiritual aspects of the widow's life. The patterns of interaction between the internal and the external environment determine the mental health status of the widow (Rand Afrikaans

University: Department of Nursing, 1992:7-9).

In this study the focus is on the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process, which form part of her internal environment, as well as the community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process which form part of her external environment. The manner in which the widow experiences widowhood and the mourning process, as well as the community's interaction with her influences her mental health status which will therefore be considered within this research project.

1.3.1.4 Nursing

This term implies a goal-directed service provided to individuals, families and the community in order to promote, maintain and restore health.

In this study, the researcher first explores and describes the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as the community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process as it has been indicated above, and thereafter the researcher applies her psychiatric nursing skills and knowledge in order to formulate guidelines for psychiatric nurses with the aim of facilitating the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

1.3.2 Theoretical statement

The theoretical statement of this research includes the central theoretical argument as well as conceptual definitions of the core concepts applicable to this study.

1.3.2.1 Central theoretical argument

Knowledge of the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as the Batswana community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process leads to the formulation of guidelines which will enable psychiatric nurses to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning

process.

1.3.2.2 Conceptual definitions

The following definitions represent an outlay of the researcher's use of core concepts that are used within this study.

Widow

This term refers to a woman who has lost her husband through death and is not re-married (Branford, 1994:115). In this study the focus is upon a female Motswana individual within her first twelve months of widowhood.

Widowhood

This term refers to a state of mourning of a woman who has lost her husband through death and has not been re-married (Branford 1994:115). In this study, widowhood is considered as a state of mourning among Batswana widows within the first twelve months after they have lost their husbands through death.

Mourning process

This term involves the actions and manner of expressing grief, which often reflect the widow's practices of her culture (Stroebe *et al.*, 1993:5). In this study, the focus is on the Batswana widow's practices of her culture with regard to widowhood and the mourning process.

Experience

This term implies an observation of or practical acquaintance with facts or events (Branford, 1994:322) that surround the experience of widowhood. The widow's practical acquaintance with widowhood and the mourning process as well as her perceptions of the community's attitudes will form her experience of widowhood and the mourning process. In this study the focus is on the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process, also in terms of experience as it is defined here.

Belief

This term involves the meaning and purpose of rituals (Popenoe, 1995:365). An individual's beliefs influence his attitude towards a situation. In this study the focus is on the belief system of the Batswana community with regard to widowhood and the mourning process.

Community

This term refers to an identifiable group of people who share a common interactive pattern and geographical location (Oral Roberts University : Anna Vaughn School of Nursing, 1990:136 - 142). In this study the community to be examined, is the Batswana people in the Mafikeng, Lichtenburg and Zeerust areas of the North West Province within South Africa.

1.3.3 Methodological statements

The methodological assumptions upon which this study is based, follow the framework of the functional reasoning approach as described by Botes (1991:19-21) as well as her model for research in nursing (Botes, 1995:622). The functional reasoning approach advocates that research should lead to the development of theories which serve to improve the practice of nursing. Nursing activities as presented within Botes' model (1995:6-22), are arranged in three levels in accordance with this practical aim.

The first level or order represents the practice of nursing, which forms the research domain for nursing. These nursing activities are aimed at the promotion, maintenance and restoration of health in the quest for wholeness. In this study, the focus will be on the psychiatric nursing practice where a psychiatric nurse is working within the Batswana community in which widows are affected by the cultural beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process.

The first level leads to the second level which is research and theory development. In this study the focus is on the description and exploration of the Batswana widow's experience as well as the Batswana community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process. After the data has been analysed and the available literature has been consulted, digested and represented, guidelines will be formulated for psychiatric

nurses in order to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the Batswana community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process. Ultimately, in accordance with Botes' theory, the practical usefulness of this research will serve as a criterion for its internal validity.

The third level of order represents the paradigmatic perspective within which this research is undertaken. In this study the metatheoretical and theoretical statements are kept within the framework of the Nursing for the Whole Person Theory (ORU, 1990:136-142) as well as other theories that use the old and the new Testaments of the Bible as the truth.

Theoretical assumptions give form to the central theoretical statement of research while methodological assumptions are reflected in the aims, the research methods as well as the criteria for validity (Botes, 1995:10). In this study, methodological assumptions shape the research objectives in their context and influence the decision about its design. In this regard, it also means exploring and describing the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as the community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process. Guidelines are subsequently formulated for psychiatric nurses in order to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the Batswana community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter an overview of the research design and method is subsequently given, followed by a detailed description of methodology in chapter two.

A qualitative design and method is followed with the aim of exploring and describing the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as the community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process. The study is conducted in the context of the Batswana community in the Mafikeng, Lichtenburg and Zeerust areas of the North West Province.

1.5 RESEARCH METHOD

In the subsequent paragraphs a brief description of the research method is provided with attention given to sampling, data collection and data analysis.

1.5.1 Sampling

The following is a brief description of how sampling is carried out within this project, with special attention given to the population, sampling method and sample size.

1.5.1.1 Population

Two populations are identified, as follows:

Population one: Batswana widows

Population one is comprised of Batswana widows within the first twelve months of widowhood and who reside within the areas of Mafikeng, Lichtenburg and Zeerust areas in the North West Province of South Africa.

Population two: Community members.

This population is comprised of close family members, friends and neighbours of the above mentioned Batswana widows.

1.5.1.2 Method of sampling

The purposive voluntary sampling method of study is used for both population one and two of the Batswana widows and the community members. The set criteria are used for the selection of participants.

1.5.1.3 Sample size

Both sample sizes are determined by data saturation (Burns & Grove, 1997:309).

1.5.2 Data Collection

An overview of the method of data collection as well as the role of the researcher is subsequently provided.

1.5.2.1 Method of data collection

Data collection takes place in the following two phases:

Phase 1: Interviews with the Batswana widows

In order to collect the necessary data about the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process, the widow's permission is obtained and data is gathered by means of an in-depth interview. Two questions are introduced to the interviewee in order to collect data about the experiences of widowhood and the mourning process.

A pilot study is conducted beforehand in order to test the applicability of these questions. Communication techniques as described by Okun (1997:26) will be utilised during the interview. Field notes are recorded after the data collection process has been completed (Creswell, 1994:152). These field notes are descriptive, reflective and demographic in nature.

Phase 2: Interviews with community members

In order to collect data about the Batswana community's beliefs about the mourning process, permission is obtained from the interviewees involved. Data is gathered by means of a semi-structured interview schedule based on the literature study which preceded this process, in order to properly explore and describe the community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process. Beforehand, the semi-structured interview schedule will be given to experts in order to verify the face and content validity of the interviewing process (Creswell, 1994:121). Furthermore, a pilot study will be conducted in order to test the applicability of the interview schedule. Communication techniques as described by Okun (1997:26) will be utilised during the interviewing process. Field notes are recorded after data collection has occurred. As in the case of phase 1, these

field notes will be descriptive, reflective and demographic in nature (Creswell, 1994:152).

1.5.2.2 Role of the researcher

Permission to gain entry to each area mentioned under 1.5.1.1 is obtained from the relevant key people namely chiefs, headmen or councillors.

The researcher then obtains permission from participants (both the Batswana widows and community members) in order to conduct the interviews in their homes. The detailed role of the researcher is described in chapter 2.

1.5.3 Data analysis

The interviews for both the Batswana widows and the community members is transcribed verbatim within this study. The transcripts are analysed in accordance with a combination of the techniques of content analysis as described by Tesch (*in* Creswell 1994:155) and Giorgi (*in* Omery, 1983:57). A co-coder is provided with a work protocol in order to guide her with a view to her independent coding and analysing of the collected data (Creswell, 1994:15). After independent coding a meeting is held involving the researcher and the co-coder with the aim of reaching consensus about data analysis.

1.6 LITERATURE CONTROL

A literature control, based on literature study of the experiences of widowhood and the mourning process, as well as the support of the Batswana widows, is employed in order to compare and contrast the findings of this research with other similar studies (Creswell, 1994:24).

1.7 GUIDELINES

Guidelines are formulated for psychiatric nurses in order to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the Batswana widows during widowhood and the mourning process.

1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 : Introduction and problem statement

Chapter 2 : Research methodology

Chapter 3 : Literature study of widowhood, the mourning process and the support of Batswana widows

Chapter 4 : Discussion of the research findings and of the literature control pertaining to the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as the community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process

Chapter 5 : Conclusions, shortcomings and recommendations pertaining to this study, with specific reference to formulation of the practical guidelines for psychiatric nurses in order to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the Batswana community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, an overview of this study is offered, including the introduction and problem statement, the objectives, the paradigmatic perspective adopted within this study, as well as a brief orientation in terms of the research methodology which is employed within this study. In this chapter, a detailed description of the research methodology is offered, with special attention given to the research design, method, and ethical issues applicable to this research, as well as to the trustworthiness of this study.

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative design is followed with the aim of exploring and describing the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as the community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process. Practical guidelines are formulated to enable psychiatric nurses to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

Burns and Grove (1997:27) define qualitative research as a systematic approach whereby the researcher tries to understand the life experience of persons in order to gain insight into the phenomena which play a role in this respect. In this study the Batswana widow's experiences as well as the community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process will be explored and described. Mouton and Marais (1990:43) define exploring as follows: it involves doing a survey of people who have had practical experience of the phenomenon to be studied, and a descriptive study involves the depiction of this experience within its practical context in terms of the individuals affected, and their subcultures.

According to Mouton and Marais (1990:90) context refers to the area, time, culture and the individual or the community's orientation with regard to the circumstances within

which the research takes place. For the purposes of this study, the context can therefore be described as follows:

The context of this study comprises the Batswana culture in the North West Province of South Africa where three areas have been selected: Mafikeng, Lichtenburg and Zeerust. The predominant ethnic group within these regions is the Batswana people.

The Batswana people are mostly found in the rural villages within these three areas, though some of them stay in the three towns within this area or the township which lies adjacent to each of these towns, namely Montshiwa-Mmabatho, Boikhutsong and Lehurutshe respectively. The Batswana people, like other black ethnic groups, have their own cultural beliefs which they have to observe when a male of the family dies.

These beliefs are evident in the norms, values and attitudes that they adopt. In terms of death these are significant especially when the wife loses a husband. In such cases, certain cultural practices have to be followed, such as rituals performed on the widow by traditional healers or close members of the family. Close members of the family should be considered as the widow's family of origin, and her in-laws. In this study, other people who will be considered as close to the widow are those friends and neighbours with whom she has a healthy relationship.

When a woman loses her husband because of death, she is immediately kept in her bedroom and she has to lie on a mattress laid on the floor; she has to wear a headgear (usually a scarf or "doek", which is a wrapped around scarf or turban) to show respect for her dead husband. She is immediately restricted from going anywhere, except for those places that she absolutely has to visit for the purpose of funeral arrangements.

All of these mark the beginning of the period of widowhood and the mourning process. For a period starting immediately after her husband's death, lasting up to twelve months, she is furthermore subjected to certain practices which differ according to families, the widow's religious affiliation, as well as her age or educational status. The in-laws are usually in charge of the situation and determine what she should do, with regard to these practices. In cases where the widow does not have immediate in-laws, her close family, or her friends or neighbours assume the caring role in which case they offer support by assisting her in funeral arrangements and performing some of the practices already explained. It is for this reason that this study includes the widow's

close relatives, friends and neighbours as part of the community members.

It is within this context that the researcher carries out the study, based on the fact that some cultural practices such as the black attire, isolation from the public, and rituals may be viewed differently by the widow as well as by the community members.

2.3 RESEARCH METHOD

A short description of the research process is provided within chapter one of this study. In this section a detailed description of sampling, the method of data collection, data analysis, and ethical issues is offered, in addition to a concise consideration of the trustworthiness of this study.

2.3.1 Sampling

The following is a detailed description of the sampling procedure that is followed within this research project, giving special attention to the identification of the population from which the sample is drawn, the method of sampling, and the size of the the sample, henceforth referred to simply as the sample size for the sake of brevity.

2.3.1.1 Population

The population for research consists of the entire aggregation of cases that meet the set of criteria as stipulated by Polit and Hungler (1995:22). This study examines two populations.

Population one: The Batswana widows

The Batswana widows who are in their first twelve months of widowhood and who reside in the areas of Mafikeng, Lichtenburg and Zeerust in the North West Province of South Africa, form the first population.

Population two: Community members

The second population consists of the Batswana community who are close family members, friends and neighbours of the widow.

2.3.1.2 Method of sampling

A purposive, and voluntary, sampling technique is used in order to select both the Batswana widows and community members. A sample can be considered as purposive when participants are consciously selected in a qualitative study (Burns & Grove, 1997:306). In this study the Batswana widows and community members will be judgementally selected in order to participate, because they have certain characteristics that are needed by the researcher such as widows wearing the mourning attire. Where necessary, the researcher may consciously select those widows and community members who are typical with regard to the Batswana widowhood and the mourning process based on the fact that they are following typical customs of the Batswana people. The criteria for inclusion of the widows and the community are set out as follows:

Criteria for widows

They must:

- have been married to Batswana husbands and living in one of the areas of Mafikeng, Lichtenburg or Zeerust in the North West Province of South Africa;
- be within their first twelve months of widowhood;
- have given consent to participate and to the use of an audio-tape during the interview;
- be able to communicate in Setswana or English.

Criteria for community members

The criteria for community members are as follows.

They must:

- be Batswana and living in the same areas as the widows;
- be either close relatives, friends or neighbours of the participating widows;

- have given consent to participate and to the use of an audio-tape during the interview;
- be able to communicate in Setswana or English.

The chiefs, headmen or councillors act as gatekeepers and are approached by sending them letters (see Appendix A) requesting them for permission to carry out research (see Appendix B) in their areas of jurisdiction. They are also requested to help the researcher in order to identify the widows and those community members who would wish to participate in the study. Their addresses are also requested in order to confirm their location. Further information is included with regard to the purpose of the study and the criteria for inclusion of participants (this pertains to both widows and community members). These authorities are requested to respond within a given period so that further arrangements can be made with prospective participants. After a list of participants has been obtained from the authorities, the researcher ensures that they meet the criteria for inclusion in this research project.

The Batswana widows and community members who meet the criteria for inclusion subsequently receive letters (see Appendix C and D) which provide information on the purpose of research and stipulating what will be expected of them as participants. These letters also clarify the fact that participation is voluntary, which means that the prospective participant may choose to participate, or decline, or withdraw from the project at any stage of the study. With regard to their consent, a detachable portion (see Appendix E) is attached to the letter so that the prospective participant can sign in order to ensure that they are willing to participate and to the use of an audio-tape. This detachable slip should be given to the researcher prior the interview.

2.3.1.3 Sampling size

The phrase "sampling size" refers to the number of participants to be involved in the study (Burns & Grove, 1997:307). In this study, the sample size is determined by means of data saturation, which implies that interviews with both the Batswana widows and their close community members are conducted until a pattern of data repetition is reached (Woods & Catanzaro, 1988:476). Morse (1991:135) confirms that data is

adequate when there is an absence of thin areas, and the theory is complete.

2.3.2 Data collection

The following is a detailed description of the role of the researcher, the method of data collection, the physical setting during the interviews, and the duration of interviews.

2.3.2.1 The role of the researcher

The researcher ensures that the letters (see Appendix A) to request permission from the chiefs, headmen or councillors of the selected areas reach them a month before the interviews, by delivering them personally. They are then requested to send a name list of those who qualify for inclusion in the study in accordance with the criteria set out together with their addresses, to the researcher.

Having received a list of prospective participants, the researcher then delivers the letters (see appendix C and D) to them in order to orientate them in terms of the research project. They are also requested to give written consent (see appendix E) confirming their willingness to participate and their acceptance of the use of an audio-tape during interviews. Appointments for data collection are subsequently arranged by the researcher telephonically or personally with regard to the date and time for interviews. Participants who give their consent to be interviewed are reminded of the appointment about three days in advance. Before the interview is started, participants are asked to hand in these signed consent slips.

2.3.2.2 Method of data collection

Data collection takes place in two phases. First, the Batswana widows are interviewed and then close family members. In order to collect data about the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process, an in-depth phenomenological interview is used. Phenomenology as a method of data collection is defined by Polit and Hungler (1995:197) as an approach which focuses on the people's lived experiences with regard to the phenomena being studied, and how those experiences are interpreted by them. Creswell (1994:12) adds that a small number of subjects are extensively

studied through a prolonged process of engagement in order to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. The widow's lived experience of widowhood and the mourning process is thus explored by asking in-depth questions such as **How does it feel to be a widow?** and **Tell me about your mourning.**

To explore and describe the community members' beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process data will be gathered by means of a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix G). The interview schedule will be formulated and grounded by literature study. The following are the guidelines which will be followed in formulating an interview schedule, as described by Bailey (1982:196).

- * Interview questions are open ended in order to allow the interviewees to express themselves freely.
- * The questions are focused to ensure that interviews give specific information required for the purpose of the study.
- * Ambiguous and the why questions are avoided in order to eliminate confusion and prejudice.
- * The questions are arranged starting from the simple to the complex, and from the broad to the more specific, in order to allow the interviewee to gradually adjust to the pattern of an interview schedule.

Pilot study

A pilot study is conducted in order to test the applicability of these in-depth questions for the widows, as well as the semi-structured interview schedule for the community members. A pilot study is described by Polit and Hungler (1995:34) as a small scale version of the study, aimed at assessing the feasibility of the whole project of research. De Vos (1998:178) add to this that it is a way in which the researcher orientates herself to the project she has in mind, as well as to improve the success and effectiveness of the investigation. The interview will be tested in this manner on one widow.

The interviews are conducted by the researcher herself and the following is the

procedure that is followed:

On the day of appointment the researcher presents herself at the participant's home at the set time, dressed simply in order to maintain professionalism (Burns & Grove, 1997:355);

The researcher knocks at the door and waits to be ushered in; After being ushered into the home she introduces herself and briefly repeats the purpose of her visit as stated in the letters (see appendix C and D);

She reassures the participant that confidentiality will be maintained, so that she is free to give the necessary information;

When both the researcher and the interviewee are ready, the two audio-tape recorders are switched on and the interview is conducted;

Each interview lasts for one to two hours.

To encourage the interviewee to talk and to ensure the free flow of the interview the following communication techniques will be employed as described by Okun (1997:75-76).

- * Minimal verbal response: A verbal response that correlates with occasional nodding like mm-mm, yes, I see, which will show the interviewee that the researcher is listening;
- * Probing : An open-ended attempt in order to persuade the interviewee to give more information about an issue under discussion. The researcher will use statements such as tell me more about that, etcetera;
- * Paraphrasing: this involves a verbal response in which the interviewer will enhance meaning by stating the interviewee's words in another form with the same meaning;
- * Clarifying: this embraces a technique that will be used to get clarity on unclear statements, like you seem to be saying;

- * **Reflecting:** this involves communicating to the interviewee that her concerns and perspectives are understood, by reflecting implied feelings, or what is observed non-verbally e.g. you seem to be uncomfortable about that;
- * **Summarising:** the interviewer's attempt to synthesize the interviewee's communication in order to highlight the main affective and cognitive themes that arise from the interview. This is conducted at the end of the session and also serves as a clarification for both the interviewee and the interviewer, besides giving the interviewee an opportunity to share her feelings about the session.

The researcher should also enhance these verbal communication techniques by demonstrating non-verbal behaviours in order to show that she is listening and that she is interested in the interviewee. These include sitting up with no physical barriers between the interviewer and the interviewee, maintaining an open posture, occasional nodding, eye contact, occasional smiling and showing an involved facial expression (Okun, 1997:65).

The researcher thanks the interviewee at the end of the interview, switches off the tape recorders and requests to leave.

The researcher then records the field notes (see Appendix F) immediately after she has left the participant's place, in order to avoid forgetting crucial aspects of the interview. The following embodies an explanation of the field notes that are recorded as part of this process, as described in Creswell (1994:152).

- * **Descriptive notes:** these are reports on the portraits or description of participants, physical setting, the interviewer's account of particular events that occurred and activities that took place during an interview;
- * **Reflective notes:** these involve a record of personal thoughts such as speculation about incidents, feelings, and problems encountered during an interview, ideas generated during the interviewing process, as well as hunches, impressions and prejudices. These will assist the researcher in analysing the data;

- * Demographic notes: these involve information pertaining to the time, place and date that describe the field setting where the interview took place.

The field notes are typed, marked and attached to each transcription to be ready for data analysis.

2.3.2.3 The physical setting

All the interviews take place in the participants' homes in order to ensure that they are free and comfortable. Participants are requested to choose a quiet and comfortable place which is convenient for an interview in their home. They are orientated about the interview setting, which takes into consideration the privacy and the room temperature which should neither be too hot nor cold. The place should also be conducive to an interview, in terms of being free from disturbing noise, telephone rings or visitors. The audio-tape is checked beforehand to ensure that it is in a good working condition and ready to record. Both the electrical and battery operated audio-tapes are checked beforehand to ensure that they are in good condition and ready for recording.

2.3.2.4 The duration of interviews

The interviews have no time limit although it is estimated that it will range between one and two hours. Participants are requested to make themselves available for about two hours.

2.3.3 Data analysis

The audiotapes for both interviews of the Batswana widows and the community members are transcribed verbatim for the purpose of content analysis. Verbatim transcriptions mean writing down the interviewer's and the interviewee's words from the audio-tape word for word. Data is analysed in accordance with a combination of the technique of content analysis as described by Tesch (in Creswell, 1994:15) and Giorgi (in Omery, 1983:57). The following is a description of the steps of this kind of data analysis:

1. The researcher starts off by dividing the transcripts into three columns. The column on the left side is for concepts, with data in the middle and column on the right side is for personal perceptions;
2. the transcripts are read to get an overall idea of the emerging themes;
3. the shortest or the most interesting transcript is chosen, and it is read again;
4. using words and sentences as units of analysis, the transcript is re-read and spoken words and sentences of the analysis are underlined;
5. the underlined spoken words and sentences are then transferred to the left column as categories, while perceptions that come to the mind are written into the right hand column;
6. the transferred categories on the right hand side are read in order to identify the main and sub-categories, as well as redundant categories;
7. the underlined spoken words are then transferred into a table indicating the main categories, sub-categories, and further categories;
8. these categories are subsequently finalised by going through the table again, and the spoken words are translated into scientific language, whilst the possibility that the categorization can be refined is still kept in mind.

The same steps are then followed to analyse the rest of the transcripts.

In this study, a psychiatric nurse specialist who is experienced in qualitative research is appointed as an independent co-coder. The transcripts, field notes and a work protocol (see appendix H) is sent to the co-coder. The work protocol includes the following stipulations:

- * the objectives of the study;
- * a clear description of the data collection method, in this study it includes the two phenomenological questions for the widows and a semi-structured interview schedule for the community members as it has been mentioned within this

dissertation;

- * the two sets of data which include the transcriptions of the widows with the field notes, as well as the transcriptions of the community members with the field notes;
- * the steps that are relevant to the process of data analysis (see Appendix H).

After the co-coder has completed her independent coding of the data, a meeting is held between the researcher and the co-coder. Both of them bring along their tables of categories which they have independently reached. These are subsequently compared in order to identify the similarities and differences of categories and subcategories. A discussion is held and consensus is reached about these categories and subcategories. The table of categories and subcategories is then finalised.

2.4 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THIS STUDY

To ensure the trustworthiness in this study, the researcher will adopt the model of Lincoln and Guba as described by Krefting (1991:214 - 222). This model is relevant to this research project, because it is recommended for qualitative studies which ensure the rigor of the researcher without compromising the relevance of the study. This model describes four criteria with a view to ensuring trustworthiness. These include the truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality of any given study of this nature. According to Lincoln and Guba (in Krefting 1991:215), who refer to the credibility of a given study, trustworthiness is obtained from observing human experiences as they are lived and perceived by the participants, whereas the internal validity of a study like this is believed to be based on the assumption that there is only a single tangible reality to be measured. Within this study, these criteria will be integrated with Woods and Catanzaro's (1988:136) measures for reliability and validity. The following is a detailed explanation of these measures:

2.4.1 Credibility

To ensure the criterion of truth value the strategy of credibility is used. Lincoln and Guba (in Krefting, 1991:215) refer to truth value as that criterion which takes into consideration

whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings for the research participants, as well as the context in which the study is conducted. Within this study the researcher adopts the following strategies in order to ensure this truth value:

- * A relationship of trust is established with the widows as well as community members to minimise any suspicions and to ensure that they relax during the interviews;
- * Field notes are written down to ensure that all observations as well as ideas coming into the researcher's mind are noted, and these are subjected to analysis along with the rest of the data;
- * Data analysis is completed by both the researcher and her independent co-coder, and a meeting between them is conducted in order to reach consensus on the data analysis; this serves to further ensure the credibility of the study;
- * In addition to these measures of ensuring credibility, a literature control is adhered to as explained in section 1.6 of chapter one of this dissertation.

Lincoln and Guba (in Krefting, 1991:215) assert that in order to ensure enhanced credibility, the researcher should also represent other multiple realities as revealed by the research participants. The truth value that Lincoln and Guba (in Krefting, 1991 : 215) refer to as credibility, is obtained from observing human experiences as they are lived and perceived by the participants, whereas the internal validity of the research project is believed to be based on an assumption that there is only a single tangible reality to be measured. This assumption is adopted for this research project. However, Woods and Catanzaro (1988:137) identify other threats to validity in a qualitative study, namely the observer effects, selection of participants, regression and mortality. Participants in research projects have a tendency of behaving in an unusual manner whilst being observed. This threatens the validity of the study. The researcher avoids imposing her perceptions on the participants as well as the study itself in the following manner:

- * Both the researcher and the independent co-coder clearly indicate cases where

they differ in terms of data analysis;

- * The literature control also assists the process of validating the findings of this research, by means of a comparison of the results of this research with extant results as found within relevant available studies within the available literature;
- * Within the research report, the researcher also indicates what her engagement with the research situation is.

To overcome the threat posed by the selection and regression of participants, the Batswana widows as well as the close community members who are selected should meet the purposive sampling criteria (Woods & Catanzaro, 1988:137). Available participants are therefore given an option to choose whether they want to be included or not. They can only be included if they consent to participate in the study.

Another threat to validity in a qualitative study is "mortality", which occurs according to Woods and Catanzaro (1988:137) when participants are engaged in the research process for a prolonged period of time. In this research, data collection will be done through individual interviews with participants for a period not exceeding two hours, in an attempt to avoid this potential threat.

2.4.2 Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (*in* Krefting, 1991:216) view transferability as a criterion against which applicability of qualitative data can be assessed. This refers to the degree in which the findings of research can be applied to other contexts and settings or within other groups. In this study it will be ensured that the findings can fit into contexts outside the research situation as determined by the degree of similarity between two contexts. It is therefore not the researcher's responsibility to control this criterion of transferability, but that of a person wanting to fit the findings into another situation.

2.4.3 Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (*in* Krefting, 1991:216) refer to this criterion as relating to the consistency of the findings of research. The study should be auditable in the sense that

it is open to other researchers who must be able to follow the researcher's decisions. Lincoln and Guba (in Krefting, 1991:221) also suggest that a replication technique should be incorporated into the qualitative design in order to ensure dependability. They further recommend that a code-recode procedure be followed. In this study data is coded during the process of analysis. It is then put aside for a period of about two weeks after which it is coded again. The findings are subsequently compared with that of the initial coding in order to ensure the greatest possible degree of dependability as defined by Lincoln and Guba.

Lincoln and Guba's (in Krefting, 1991:216) concepts of dependability further include sources of variability in the research project such as the increasing insight of the researcher, and the participant's fatigue or changes in her life situation. Variability in qualitative research also includes the variable range of the experience of the participants, whereas Woods and Catanzaro (1988:137) see reliability of a qualitative study to be judged by whether the researcher is independent enough to generate the same constructs in a similar situation or whether she would place the data in the same constructs that were previously generated. There are, however, threats to these variables as identified by Woods and Catanzaro (1988:136), who consider the status of the researcher as a threat to reliability in the sense that participants may at some stage think that she is more knowledgeable about the subject of widowhood and the mourning process than they are. This attitude may affect their responses. To ensure the dependability of the findings, the involvement of a co-coder may eliminate these uncertainties.

In this study, therefore, the initial identification of participants is done by neutral persons (chiefs, headmen or councillors) after which the researcher checks if they meet the set criteria. The selection is also completed in accordance with the suitability of the participants and the fact that the widows and their close community members can be distinguished from the rest of the population (Woods & Catanzaro, 1988:136). They are also requested to give consent to ensure their willingness to participate in the study as it has been mentioned within this dissertation. All of these measures are adhered to in order to ensure the dependability criterion.

Another potential threat to dependability is the social environment of the participants that is, their suitability with regard to the context of the required information. For this reason, the researcher is the only person conducting the interviews, so the field notes will highlight any discrepancies with regard to the information. This is indicated during the process of data analysis.

2.4.4 Confirmability

As a criterion to ensure neutrality, confirmability is viewed by Lincoln and Guba (in Krefting, 1991:221) as a measure related to data interpretation. It involves the external auditing process in which another researcher could arrive at comparable conclusions using the same data and the context of the study. To ensure the confirmability of this study, the researcher makes all the raw data, field notes, data analysis documents, the interpretation of categories, as well as the interview schedules available for auditing.

2.5 ETHICAL ISSUES

Nursing research is a procedure that utilizes human beings as participants. The researcher has to consider certain ethical issues in order to ensure that the rights of participants are observed (Burns & Grove, 1997:200). The following is an explanation of the participant's rights to privacy, anonymity, fair treatment as well as protection from discomfort and harm.

2.5.1 The right to privacy

A participant in research has the right to determine the time, the extent as well as circumstances under which private information will be disclosed or withheld from other people (Burns & Grove, 1997:203). In this study, the interviews are conducted at the participants' homes and they will be afforded the freedom to choose a private place in their home where an interview can be conducted without threatening their privacy. Their attitudes, values, beliefs, behaviours, opinions and all procedures will be treated confidentially. Moreover, their consent is obtained after a proper explanation with regard to the study has been done (Burns & Grove, 1997:203).

2.5.2 The right to anonymity and confidentiality

Every research participant has the right to remain anonymous and has the right to know that the data will remain confidential (Burns & Grove, 1997:204). Although the researcher knows the participants' identity, it is confidential especially in relation to the findings of research. All the information obtained during data collection is treated confidentially in that the widows' and members of the community's names will not be mentioned within the relevant documents. Instead, codes are used. Raw data is not made accessible to any person who is not involved in this study.

2.5.3 The right to fair treatment

Burns and Grove (1997 : 205) view the right to fair treatment as based on an ethical principle of justice. In this study, fairness is maintained in that the criteria for the selection of participants are clearly stated and are followed to ensure that those willing to participate are fairly included for interviews. The findings of this study are also made available to the participants so that they are aware of their contribution to the study. All agreements with regard to the role of the researcher and that of the participant are respected throughout the process of this study.

2.5.4 The right to protection from discomfort and harm

Burns and Grove (1997:206) assert that a researcher should do good and above all, should cause no harm to the research participants. In this study the researcher uses her interpersonal skills as a psychiatric nurse in order to handle situations where participants may experience anxiety or embarrassment with regard to the questions that may be asked (Burns & Grove, 1997:206). Where necessary, the researcher uses empathic skills to ensure the emotional support of participants, and their interests as well as their wishes are consistently considered.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a detailed description is offered of the research design, the methods of data collection measures to ensure reliability or trustworthiness, as well as ethical

issues. The next chapter deals with the literature study of Batswana widowhood, the mourning process, as well as the support of the widows.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE STUDY OF WIDOWHOOD, THE MOURNING PROCESS AND THE SUPPORT OF THE BATSWANA WIDOWS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter a detailed description of the research methodology is offered. This chapter is concerned with the literature study of widowhood and the mourning process as well as the support of widows.

3.2 WIDOWHOOD AS A CONCEPT

Widowhood refers to a state of a woman who has lost her husband to death and who has not married again (Branford, 1994:1115). Mendes de Leon, Kasl and Jacobs (1994:615) define widowhood simply as a state resulting from the loss of a spouse. Widowhood as a concept, includes the loss of a spouse for both men and women, but within this study the focus is solely on widows (women). In an attempt to clarify widowhood as a serious life condition, Holmes and Rahe (*in* Stroebe, Stroebe & Hansson, 1993:196), and Farberow, Galagher-Thompson, Gilewski and Thompson (1992:107), all emphasize that it is a most stressful, difficult life event. This stressfulness, is placed in perspective when the effects of widowhood are discussed within this dissertation.

3.2.1 The historical perspective of widowhood and mourning

Widowhood, like other life experiences, seems to have undergone changes through historical developments. The history of widowhood and mourning has undergone evolutionary changes within various cultural perspectives. Schulz (1978:137) states that Sigmund Freud is the first person to explain the psychodynamics of grief; he (Freud) believes that grief represents the termination of the denial of death. Later on in his career Freud still explains grief as a process by which the individual progressively withdraws the energy that connected her to the object of her love (Schulz, 1988:137).

This energy is believed to be bound to the memories and ideas that arose from the

individual's interaction with the dead person when this person was still alive. To resolve this grief, an individual should focus on the lost person, thus bringing each memory of a person to the conscious. Today people still engage in talking, remembering, regretting, appreciating and ventilating feelings as a form of coming to terms with the reality of death, as stated by Feinstein and Mayo (1990:128), Sable (1992:267) and, Stroebe and Stroebe (1993:213).

The modern trends of life and medical advances are supposed to improve the lifespan of individuals. The death pattern as observed by Pincus (1974:176) and Flint (1990:11) show that men still die at a considerably younger age than women. This pattern shows that historically, the trend that men die at a younger age than women is still true today as it was some twenty years ago. This means that there are still more widows than widowers. Widowhood in the early twentieth century especially in the European countries was as result of war as stated by Lecher (in Schoenberg *et al.*, 1975:96) whereas presently in South Africa it is a result of violence as stated by Makhamedzha (1998:18), especially among the black population. This trend still apply that as history has an influence on widowhood and the mourning process, so does the culture of different people.

3.2.2 A cultural perspective of widowhood and the mourning process

Fulton and Bendiksen (1976:244) refer to culture as the ideas, norms, values, practices and beliefs that are historically shared by members of a group or society, as it has been mentioned within this dissertation. This definition clearly indicates the relationship between history and culture. This relationship is of importance to this study because it implies that culture becomes modified with time, meaning that the values of the widows that were relevant thirty years ago, may not be relevant today.

Every culture has its own values, ideas, beliefs and practices with regard to death. In a study on cultural perspectives of grief which was undertaken by Cowles (1996:292) participants agreed that grief as an intrapersonal experience, shows no difference in the way that it affects different cultural groups. The differences noted in that study were individualized, both within cultural groups as well as across cultural groups.

Rosenblatt (in Stroebe *et al.*, 1993:103) argues that there are similarities in grieving across a diversity of human cultures, e.g. in the case of grieving the loss of someone close. He points out, however, that cultures differ widely in defining death and the appropriate manner of grieving, in the same way that families also differ in the manner in which they grieve loss. This is evident when some families struggle with rules regarding the mourning process when someone dies. This is not uncommon among Batswana families, especially modern families who are confused by the integration of Western norms with African ones. Rosenblatt (in Stroebe *et al.*, 1993:110) cited that in some cultures, a person who is bereaved from a spouse or a significant person is expected to mourn for a lifetime. Kastenbaum (1977:263) is in agreement with Rosenblatt, that cultures differ in their specific signs of mourning, but universally it is common for the bereaved to engage in some type of public behaviour that acknowledges the reaction to death.

As far as widowhood and the mourning process are concerned, Kalish (1985:209) cites that the Agutaines of Polawan consider widows as unclean and they therefore have to announce their presence wherever they are. This is to alert people so that they can avoid coming closer to them. Potash (1986:160) studies the differences in widowhood behaviours among different cultures in Africa and concludes that making generalizations is inaccurate because every society or cultural group has its own customs with regard to widowhood and the mourning process. She specifically points out that although women may be oppressed as wives, other cultures honour them as widows or divorcees because they can acquire the power and influence of male status. However, Pauw's (1990:76) observations differ from Potash in that his research, conducted among the Basotho and Batswana societies, reveals that widows are isolated from public life.

Most of these rituals affecting the Batswana widows are observed to be common among both the Basotho and Batswana, with slight differences here and there between these two cultural groups (Pauw, 1990:83). Having sought clarification within this study on why the widow is treated differently from other mourners or even a widower, the following reasons were given:

- * A woman has different periods of womanhood which are attributed to her

sexuality like menstruation or pregnancy. These states necessitate strict taboos for the widow;

- * A woman is the man's servant, and therefore she is subject to the man;
- * She owes her husband the respect and hence should be suspended from any form of activities that she might have enjoyed, like feasting, having visitors or visiting others, or enjoying radio and television programmes. Some household activities like needlework and mending are also prohibited (Pauw, 1990:84).

Kalish (1985:268) seems to defend these cultural norms because he maintains that a widow is not ostracized as such in her society. Instead he argues that people often do not know what to say to her, so she is better avoided (Kalish, 1985:268).

3.3 THE CONCEPTS OF MOURNING, GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT

The following discussion focuses on the mourning process with special attention given to the definitions of mourning, grief and bereavement, phases of mourning and grief, and the effects of widowhood and the mourning process.

3.3.1 Description of key concepts

The literature on mourning is complex in that it encompasses the three concepts of mourning, grief and bereavement. The definitions of these terms within the available literature are interchangeable and overlap so the researcher has, for the sake of this study, re-examined the three concepts in an attempt to achieve greater clarity. Based on this re-examination of these terms, mourning is defined interchangeably and in comparison with grief and bereavement, as it is difficult to separate them completely. It is cited by Reeves, Neale and Kutscher (1973:94) that mourning is related to bereavement and grief.

Mourning is defined by Parkes, Despelder and Strickland (*in* Cowles, 1996:287) as a socially or culturally defined behavioural display of grief. Parkes and Weiss (1983:2) and Kalish (1985:182) add to this definition that mourning is an observable expression of grief, and that grief is the overall reaction to loss and bereavement. Stroebe, Stroebe

and Hansson's (1993:5) further clarify that bereavement is the objective situation of having lost someone significant; while grief is the emotional response to one's loss. Schoenberg (1980:245) and Ramsay (*in* Cleiren, 1993:6) are in agreement with the above definitions, although Schoenberg goes further to say that mourning is an active condition or period during which the bereaved person is doing something about her feelings. Worden (*in* Wright, 1999 : 62) confirms that these concepts are inseparable, stating that mourning is the process which occurs after loss, whereas grief is the personal experience of the loss. Freud (*in* Cleiren, 1993:6) uniquely defines mourning in his psychoanalytic sense, as that process in which a person unwillingly has to withdraw libido from a loved object; in this case the widow withdraws libido from the husband.

In their definitions of these terms, the following authors, Kastenbaum (1977:243), Kalish (1985:182), Stroebe *et al.* (1993:5), Everill (*in* Cleiren, 1993:6) Parkes and Despelder (*in* Cowles, 1996:287) emphasize the cultural aspect of mourning, as it is evident from the following definitions. Mourning is the culturally patterned expressions of the bereaved person's thoughts and feelings (Kastenbaum, 1977:243). In their turn Stroebe *et al.* (1993:5) state an indication of actions and manner of expressing grief, which often reflect the mourning practices of one's culture. Kalish (1985:182) adds to the above that the ways in which a person mourns are heavily influenced by her culture. Everill (*in* Cleiren, 1993:6) is also in agreement with this notion, but substitutes culture with community, and reaches the conclusion that mourning is the overt reaction to the loss as prescribed by the community.

To complete the definition of the relationship of these concepts, it is necessary to further clarify bereavement, and to place it into perspective. According to Stroebe *et al.* (1993:5) bereavement is the objective situation of having lost someone significant as it has been stated within this chapter. Cleiren's (1993:6) definition is more elaborate in that he states that bereavement is the actions following upon the event of having something or someone go permanently out of one's control, possession or environment. While loss is also related to the concepts under discussion, it is defined by both Cleiren (1993:6) and Kalish (1985:182) as simply synonymous to bereavement which is

described as "to take away from, to rob or to dispossess."

Based on this overview of these definitions, this study focuses on Batswana widow's being bereaved because of having lost their loved ones, their husbands. The widow manifests with grief, which is the emotional reaction or response to her loss. Mourning then follows, which is a cultural expression of her grief. The widow furthermore expresses her widowhood and the mourning process according to the Batswana culture.

3.3.2 The phases of mourning and grief

Mourning and grief resemble a process which should take its course and be resolved.

The term normal grief refers to grief that follows a normal course of events as it is described within this dissertation. When mourning and grief fail to resolve the terms such as abnormal, disordered, complicated, pathological or chronic grief is implied (Glick, Parkes & Weiss *in* Kastenbaum, 1977:247). Anticipatory grief is defined by Cleiren (1993:4), Hardt (1979:130) and Wright (1991:13) as the kind of grief that is experienced before the actual death occurs. There are some warning signs such as a long illness and the survivor begins with some tasks of mourning in anticipation of death.

This type of grief can be experienced by widows who nursed their husbands over a long period, as explained by the abovementioned authors.

In the following discussion the various phases of mourning and grief are treated in greater detail:

Kubler-Ross (*in* Wright, 1991:61) describes five stages through which a grieving person goes namely denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Schulz (1978:140) differs slightly from Kubler-Ross in this respect that he describes only four stages of anticipated grief. His first stage is depression, which is the fourth stage in the case of Kubler-Ross. However, Schulz asserts that the depression does not decrease emotional trauma after death but is followed by a heightened concern for the ill person. The next stage according to Schulz (1978:140) is the rehearsal of death and finally, an attempt to adjust to the consequences of death.

3.3.2.1 The first phase : numbing, distress or shock

Bowlby (in Sable, 1989:550), Kastenbaum (1977:247), Pincus (1974:13) and Sable (1992:267) are in agreement that the first phase of mourning or grief is that of numbing, distress or shock because the person experiences numbness, and severe grief. Bankoff (1983:828), on the other hand, describes this phase as the crisis-loss-phase because the bereaved person's world is in chaos; she feels as if she has lost the most important aspect of herself, and that what is left is meaningless and irrelevant.

Farberow et al. (1992:107), in describing this mourning stage in terms of a time perspective, asserts that it occurs during the first six months of loss, while Sable (1992:267) believes that it only lasts for a few hours up to a week, whilst Jacob (1996:284) attaches a time perspective of one to four months in this respect. Horowitz (in Eells et al., 1995:272) terms this stage as the outcry phase, marked by an intense outpouring of sadness and tears. The above mentioned authors also share with Bowlby (in Sable, 1989:550) the idea that during this crisis loss phase, the bereaved person experiences separation anxiety and attempts to recover the lost person. These authors are in agreement with regard to these symptoms, stating that these characterise the first phase of mourning, with the following additional symptoms:

- * Shock, which frequently provokes involuntary responses;
- * being stunned, with feelings of life being unreal;
- * physical collapse, violent outburst,
- * dazed withdrawals, denial and inability to accept death;
- * distress;
- * outcry, with intense outpouring of sadness.

All of the authors considered here, describe this phase in terms of these symptoms.

There is thus no consensus on the time frame with regard to the duration of each phase but there is consensus on the events that occur during this first phase of numbing.

3.3.2.2 The second phase : yearning and searching

This is the stage during which the bereaved yearn for the deceased person, or attempts to recover the loss (Jacob, 1996:284; Farberow et al., 1992:121; Sable, 1992:267; Kastenbaum, 1977:247). This phase is characterized by the following aspects according to these authors:

- * Bereavement and despair with some periods of weeping;
- * denial that death has occurred;
- * separation anxiety is outstanding.

Pincus (1974:113) believes that this is a more controlled phase during which funeral arrangements can be made. He differs from other authors mentioned above in the sense that they view this stage as one of intense emotions, with a lot of weeping still present.

3.3.2.3 The third phase : grief and recovery

Stroebe et al. (1993:24) refer to this as the phase during which an individual returns to a feeling of wellbeing. The bereaved realises what the loss means for her and begin to shift their attention to the world around her. Kastenbaum (1977:243) is in agreement with Stroebe et al. (1993:24) that this is the phase of the realization of the loss whereas Jacob (1996:284) and Bowlby (in Sable, 1989:550) describe it as a phase of distress, though they acknowledge that ultimately, an individual does come into full realization of the loss in this phase of the mourning process. Jacob (1996:284) emphasizes that the distress is mainly caused by loneliness and feeling empty as was expressed by the widows in his study. This phase leads to the fourth one, the phase of reorganization.

There are some differences in the different authors' views of the progression of these stages, in that some authors Kastenbaum (1977:248); Bowlby (in Sable, 1989:550) and Everill and Nunley (in Stroebe et al., 1993:78) still view it as a stage of distress, disorganization and anger while others maintain that it is a stage characterized predominantly with reorganization.

3.3.2.4 The fourth phase : reorganization or "working through"

Stroebe et al. (1993:24) refer to this phase as reorganization because the bereaved comes to realise that she has grieved and should consider returning to work, re-experience pleasure and seek the companionship and love of other people. Horowitz (in Eells et al., 1995:272), Parkes (1986:27) and Wallbank (1992:124) describe this phase vaguely as a stage of recovery but it is clear from their explanations that the bereaved person reorganises her life in this phase. Worden (in Kalish, 1985:183) gives a psychoanalytic explanation: the bereaved widow withdraws her emotional energy from the dead person and re-invests it into new, healthy relationships. These new relationships are forged, and choices are made about new relationships although memories of the deceased person are not forgotten as stated by Blyth (in Baumann, 1998:123). Bowlby (in Wright, 1991:63) is in agreement with Kubler-Ross (in Wright, 1991:63) that the bereaved should pass through all of these phases before the mourning process can be resolved and that one comes out of this phase, strengthened and enriched.

Much as the above-mentioned factors are necessary for mourning to be resolved, Blyth (in Baumann, 1998:124) maintains that the following additional aspects of death may facilitate the normal mourning process:

- * expected and natural death;
- * when a close and healthy relationship existed between the bereaved and the deceased;
- * when the bereaved widow can express feelings, manage anxiety and cope with stress;
- * when the mourner's culture provides for healing rituals and support mechanisms; and
- * when the mourner's social situation is not affected too severely by the loss. This view is shared by Leick and Davidsen-Neilsen (1991:25).

3.3.3 Complicated mourning

Prigerson et al. (1995:23), Sable (1992:269) and Blyth (in Baumann, 1998:24) all agree that complicated, disordered, or morbid grief reaction occur when the bereaved has chronic grief reactions that continue for a long time (more than a year or two), or when the reaction to loss is intensified with the resultant difficulty to review life plans. This grief reaction may be observed in an individual with symptoms of anxiety, depression or anger, guilt feelings, poor self esteem and feelings of worthlessness, to mention some of them. Lindemann (in Fulton & Bendiksen, 1976:215) further divides morbid grief into delayed and distorted reactions. He asserts that grief is delayed when an individual reacts after a long time of death, like after two months or so. In distorted reaction, an individual develops overactivity without a sense of loss, may develop symptoms belonging to the deceased, including a group of psychosomatic symptoms like ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis or asthma. These symptoms suggest that mourning and grief has effects on the bereaved individual.

3.3.4 Coping with widowhood and the mourning process

Coping is defined by Jacob (1996:284) as cognitive, behavioural or psychosocial strategies used by the widow in order to alleviate the distress of grief. Weiss (in Cleiren, 1993:7) and Lindemann (in Cleiren, 1993:14) refer to coping as recovery and define it as a return to the state that prevailed before bereavement.

Lindemann further clarifies that in coping with widowhood and mourning the emancipation from the relationship with the deceased, readjustment to the environment and formation of new relationships occur. Cleiren, complements both Lindemann and Weiss when he goes further to say that adaptation to bereavement does not only mean adjustment to loss but also adjustment to all areas of life in the absence of the lost person. Stroebe et al. (1993:213) confirm the possibility of the possible adjustment to loss: their study finds that although the widows were depressed within the first four to six months after their loss, there was considerable improvement when the study was repeated after eighteen months.

Lazams and Folkman (in Kleinke, 1991:3) define coping as the efforts people make in

order to manage situations that they have appraised as potentially harmful or stressful. This definition is person orientated because it places the responsibility of coping with the person who is experiencing grief. An individual has to engage herself in an effort of planning in order to cope; the outcome may be positive or negative because coping is a process and it takes time.

3.3.4.1 Coping strategies

For the widow to engage in the coping process she should first acknowledge the mourning and grief, because it is natural at the time of loss. Blyth (in Baumann, 1998:123) emphasizes that this adaptation is necessary because, in South Africa with its high levels of political, criminal and domestic violence, many people face extremely traumatic losses. These losses go hand in hand with the individual responses that necessitate coping. The following are the common feelings and behaviours in response to loss as stated by Blyth (in Baumann, 1998:123):

- * Feelings of:
 - sadness, loneliness, anger;
 - guilt, frustration, anxiety;
 - shock, helplessness, numbness;

- * Behaviours:
 - sleep and appetite disturbances, dreams about the deceased;
 - social withdrawal, avoiding or seeking out reminders of the deceased person;
 - restlessness and overactivity, crying.

- * Thoughts:
 - inability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things that happened;

- preoccupation with the thoughts of the deceased.

* Physical sensations:

- a hollow feeling in the pit of the stomach, tightness in the throat or chest;
- oversensitivity to noise; and
- muscle weakness, loss of energy and shortness of breath.

These symptoms are considered as normal reactions which may be reassuring to the widow. If they exceed the acceptable severity and period, however, and coping is not forthcoming, then these symptoms are referred to as disordered mourning, pathological grief, or morbid or complicated grief as described by Blyth (*in* Baumann, 1998:123), Pincus (1974:124), Lindemann (*in* Fulton & Bendiksen, 1976:215) and Prigerson *et al.* (1995:23). Sable (1989:555) observes that the widows who participated in her study felt relieved from anxiety just by being told that their feelings and behaviours were typical. Acknowledgement of the normality of these reactions therefore contributes to the facilitation of coping.

Kleinke (1991:129) suggests the following skills in order to assist the widow's coping with her loss:

* Coping skill one:

Accepting her loss as worthy of grief work. This involves the actual acknowledgement of the loss, that is, the widow should accept that death has occurred. This will allow her to go through the grief process and to experience each phase, which should subsequently lead to the second coping skill.

* Coping skill two:

Being open to the experience of mourning. This is not pleasant to the one who experiences it but she will benefit by taking it as a part of life that is shared by everyone. It affects both feelings, the body, thoughts and behaviours (as discussed above within this chapter).

* Coping skill three:

This skill involves the recognition of the stages of grief work as tasks for which we are responsible ourselves. Worden (*in* Kleinke, 1991:131) explained the stages that widows should work through in order to ultimately come to terms with the reality of the loss. The degree to which people are affected as well as the time taken up in order to resolve grief depends on the individual because each widow is unique. These stages have been discussed within this chapter, under the heading of "phases of mourning," but it still has to be mentioned that Wortman and Silver (*in* Kleinke, 1991:131) distinguish a further, last stage, referred to as the stage of new identity. This stage involves an adaptation to a new life which is different from the life that prevailed before the death of the partner, as well as the emotional growth experienced as a result of this adaptation. In order for the experience to be really enriching, it is important for the widow to consider these stages as tasks that she must take the responsibility of solving rather than the grief stages that happen to her. These tasks are discussed in greater detail along with the description of the next coping skill.

* Coping skill four:

This skill involves taking time to accomplish the four tasks of grief work. Blyth (*in* Baumann, 1998:123) and Worden (*in* Kleinke, 1991:132) recommend the following tasks which should be accomplished by the bereaved person who has to do grief work:

- Task One: Accepting the reality of the loss

This task entails the individual's ability to accept the loss as real and to be prepared to let go of the dead person. This does not mean that an individual should underestimate the loss; neither should she deny it by entertaining the thoughts of reversing what has happened. The widow should therefore realise that the loss is permanent and that it cannot be reversed.

- Task Two: Experiencing pain and grief

It is necessary for an individual to open up to experiencing the tasks of grief work fully.

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accomplished before it occurs.

* Support systems or an adequate social network

It is easier to overcome grief when one is surrounded by an adequate social network which bolsters a sense of self worth, trust and direction in future life. It is therefore necessary to activate one's support systems during times of loss. This facilitates coping skill four, which is accomplishing the task of grief work.

* Coping skill five: Finding a meaning for death

This skill becomes easier if a person is within a culture that is death accepting. Such cultures acknowledge that death is a natural way of completing a life cycle, and that it is created by God. It is a different situation from those cultures that are death denying. A death accepting attitude is healthy and helps the survivors to view the loss positively and to be prepared to move forward.

* Coping skill six : Learning how to let go

Learning how to let go of someone one loves is necessary in order to facilitate coping with such loss. Firstly, the widow must accept that we cannot own other people. One therefore needs to relinquish her ownership of the dead person in order to free herself of that burden. This comes down to the avoidance of placing oneself in a no-win situation by wanting to control situations that are beyond our control. Secondly, this skill involves getting unhooked from the addiction to the loved one. When one loves someone the relationships may end up being an addiction because of the gratifications derived from the person. These attitudes can be solved by:

- being philosophical, by telling ourselves that such gratifications are benefits and not rights. The person should learn to free herself from thinking that she can get what she wants (such as sex), at any time. This boils down to differentiating between one's expectations, wants and demands. Once a person is free from these attitudes, it will be easier to release the lost person emotionally, and be able to cope.

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* Coping skill six : Learning how to let go

Learning how to let go of someone one loves is necessary in order to facilitate coping with such loss. Firstly, the widow must accept that we cannot own other people. One therefore needs to relinquish her ownership of the dead person in order to free herself of that burden. This comes down to the avoidance of placing oneself in a no-win situation by wanting to control situations that are beyond our control. Secondly, this skill involves getting unhooked from the addiction to the loved one. When one loves someone the relationships may end up being an addiction because of the gratifications derived from the person. These attitudes can be solved by:

- being philosophical, by telling ourselves that such gratifications are benefits and not rights. The person should learn to free herself from thinking that she can get what she wants (such as sex), at any time. This boils down to differentiating between one's expectations, wants and demands. Once a person is free from these attitudes, it will be easier to release the lost person emotionally, and be able to cope.

- Replacing the missing nurturance by utilising one's support systems. Although it is not easy to replace a person who was loved, new relationships can fill the gap, as long as one realises that one can survive immediate gratifications.
- Thinking rationally means analysing one's emotions caused by unrealistic and irrational thoughts which make the loss seem unfair. The senses anger, frustration and jealousy should be replaced by rational techniques such as thought stopping, stimulus control, and taking a balanced view.
- Saying the final goodbye

Immediately after the loss of a loved one all objects such as photos, letters and others are hidden because they aggravate the grief initially when the loss has been accepted and once grief is overcome these are taken out to say a final goodbye to the person. This "implosion day" marks the individual's ability to deal with feelings evoked by such mementoes. At the end of this process, these can be kept or disposed of, as long as one is ready to start a new chapter in life.

* Coping skill seven : recognising our individuality

Every individual experiencing the loss should realise her uniqueness and that she should cope in her own way. Although it may be regarded as a fact that distress and depression are inevitable, this may ultimately not be true. It may be possible for other people to face their losses in a more calm and positive manner, and this should not make one feel that it is abnormal. It is also not true to assume that some losses can never be completely resolved because much as feelings of sadness do occur once in a while, they should not be viewed as signs of weakness. The important thing is for one to live up to one's own feelings, which lead to the last coping skill which is subsequently concisely discussed.

* Coping skill eight : Understanding how to offer support

It has been highlighted within this chapter that the grief process may help an individual emerge more matured and enriched with experience of dealing with the loss. This coping skill involves parting with such experience by offering support to others who may

suffer the same loss. Lehman, Ellard and Wortman (*in* Kleinke, 1991:140) offer the following suggestions in order for the individual to be effective in this respect:

- that the helpful responses may be expressing genuine concern and care, thus affording, the bereaved person an opportunity to express feelings, to be there when needed, and offering the opportunity for activities. Responses such as offering advice to be optimistic about life are not taken negatively by those who suffered the loss. Rather, they value the showing of concern and support and the fact that people are most available when they are needed. These coping skills give the assurance that people experiencing loss of different types can get support from those who are committed to helping them adapt more swiftly to their loss, such as widows.

In the study conducted by Sable (1989:555) it was observed that widows who were involved felt relieved from anxiety by just being told that their feelings and behaviour were typical. Other mechanisms that were found to facilitate coping are as follows:

- a supportive and adequate social network;
- companionship provided by caring family members and friends;
- rationalization, which allows the widow to transform a painful experience into a more acceptable one;
- faith that people have in God make them stronger when they believe that heaven is a resting place and that it is God's will that their loved one has died;
- humor also helps one to distance herself from the emotional pain and transform a tragedy into an absurd (Stroebe *et al.*, 1993:32).

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the literature study on widowhood, the mourning process, bereavement and grief, and the coping of the widows has been discussed. The next chapter discusses research findings and a literature control of the widow's experience of

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND OF THE LITERATURE CONTROL PERTAINING TO THE BATSWANA WIDOW'S EXPERIENCE OF WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS AS WELL AS THE COMMUNITY'S BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter a literature overview is provided in order to ground the formulation of the interview schedule for semi-structured interviews. In this chapter the research findings of the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as the Batswana community's perceptions of widowhood and the mourning process are discussed and confirmed with the aid of existing literature. The researcher first describes the accomplishment of the data collection and data analysis, then discusses the findings of research, enriched by examples of direct quotations from transcriptions of interviews, and enriched, in addition, by confirming and testing these findings in terms of the existing literature pertaining to widowhood. The existing literature will be used to confirm the findings of this research, to indicate those findings that are unique to this study, in addition to pointing out those findings that are found within the literature but are not confirmed by this study (Woods & Catanzaro, 1988:207).

TABLE 4.1 : THE BATSWANA WIDOW'S EXPERIENCE OF WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

COLUMN A	COLUMN B	COLUMN C	COLUMN D	COLUMN E
<p>EXPERIENCES FEELINGS OF ISOLATION DUE TO STIGMATIZATION OF WIDOWHOOD</p>	<p>EXPERIENCE OF STRESSFUL LIFE DUE TO THE CUSTOMS PRESCRIBED BY SOCIETY</p>	<p>EXPERIENCE OF THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS</p>	<p>EXPERIENCES FEELINGS OF HOPELESSNESS RESULTING FROM THE LOSS OF HUSBAND</p>	<p>EXPERIENCES SENSE OF OVER RESPONSIBILITY DUE TO THE ABSENCE OF PARTNER</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of being shunned by society due to cultural beliefs associated with widowhood and the mourning process: * Wearing of mourning clothes. * Widows believed to be infested with bad luck ("sefifi"): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being feared for potential harm to the life of people, animals and crops. - People avoid contact due to fear of 'contamination'. - Widow cooked for and served by another widow. - Eating utensils separated from the rest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of the need to fulfil the customs expected by society during the mourning process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Undergoing the cleansing process. * The widow's responsibility to maintain herself and family reputation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The widow is expected to observe rules of mourning a sign of self respect. - Display good behaviour as a sign of respect for her late husband. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience feelings of being supported during bereavement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Support by own family members. * Support by friends, neighbours and others. • Experience of spiritual support based on strong Christian beliefs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The belief that everything has been planned by God. * Reassurance that God will take care of the situation. * The widows' trust in the church as a strong support system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of loss of emotional support of husband: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The widow lacks someone to talk to. * Relatives disappear very soon after the burial. * The in-laws aggravate the situation with their bitterness. * Friends and neighbours are afraid to visit. * The widow experiences emotional pain due to loss of love: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She will never see nor enjoy his company anymore. - She has nobody to share domestic responsibilities with. * The widow experiences difficulty in accepting the death of husband. * The widow experiences emotional outbursts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences difficulty in managing the disruption in family life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The widow lacks someone to share important family matters with. * The widow experiences difficulty in maintaining household property. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problems related to routine maintenance and repairs of property. - Problems related to the maintenance of live-stock.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of sense of being imprisoned due to discriminatory restrictions * The widow is required to stay indoors for a specific period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She is not allowed to move freely. <p>The widow is not allowed to visit other households.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When compelled to leave home the widow is allowed to go to a particular place only and go straight home. * The widow is restricted from performing certain activities and social roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She is not supposed to attend social gatherings. - She must be home before sunset to set on a candle light in her bedroom. - She is not supposed to get involved in relationships with men. - She is not expected to talk to people freely. - The mourning clothes are washed only at night. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of disruption of family relationships: * The widow is blamed for the death of husband. * The in-laws take control of the situation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making too many prescriptions. - Uttering negative statements. - Demanding to be given part of the estate. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experience of feelings of unworthiness due to the loss of father figure: * Loss of dignity and feelings of inadequacy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The widow feels light and empty. - The widow feels insecure and unprotected. - The widow experiences difficulty in disciplining the children. * Experience of stress related symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Psychological symptoms. - Physical symptoms. * Experience of loss of financial security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The widow fears future financial survival due to loss of breadwinner. - The widow fears for future education of children. 	
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4.2 REALISATION OF DATA

The following is a description of how data collection and data analysis was realized within this project.

4.2.1 The realisation of data collection

This research consists of two sets of samples. For the identification of potential participants a purposive voluntary sampling technique was completed for both sets of samples as described in chapter two (see 2.1.2). The first sample was drawn from the Batswana widows in mourning within the areas of Mafikeng, Zeerust and Lichtenburg, in the North West Province, South Africa, and the second sample was drawn from the Batswana community comprising of these widows' relatives, friends or neighbours in the same areas.

For the orientation of potential participants and in order to request them to participate in the project, letters were written to them (see annexure C & D). These were delivered to their houses and a follow-up was telephonically made in order to confirm their willingness to participate, as well as in order to secure appointments for the interviews. Where potential participants did not have telephones such follow up was made personally by the researcher by visiting them at home. About five widows declined participation indirectly. They kept on postponing the appointments until it was too late to do the interviews and the researcher had to contact other widows.

The participants who confirmed their willingness to participate were then visited at their homes on the date and time agreed upon with the researcher. The interviews were conducted and the data was recorded using both electricity and battery operated audio tapes. In cases where electricity was not available, only a battery operated audio tape was used. Field notes were written immediately after each interview.

For the first sample two phenomenological questions were used (see 2.3.2.2) and data saturation was achieved after having interviewed **eight** widows who met the criteria for selection. For the second sample a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix G) was used and data saturation was achieved after having interviewed **seven** community members who met the selection criteria. Verbatim transcription of the

interviews was done thereafter.

4.2.2 The realisation of data analysis

The audiotapes for all the interviews were labelled and each one of them transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions as well as the field notes (which were subsequently labelled according to the sequence of interviews for both the widows and community members) were typed. Data analysis was then completed independently by a researcher who is a psychiatric nurse specialist, as well as a nurse specialist with qualitative research experience who acted as the co-coder. A meeting for the consensus discussion between the researcher and the co-coder was organised after independent coding had occurred. Consensus was reached after a short discussion because independent coding culminated into the identification of the same main-, sub-, and further categories. Data was converted into scientific language and summarised as found in tables 4.1 and 4.11 within this dissertation. The following is a detailed description of these research findings.

4.3 THE STUDY FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONFIRMATION

The consensus reached between the researcher and the co-coder resulted in the identification of five main categories for the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process. For the Batswana community's perceptions of widowhood and the mourning process four main categories were identified. These two sets of data are subsequently separately discussed.

A detailed discussion of the research findings (main -, sub- , and further categories) is enriched with relevant quotations taken from the interviews with the widows. The existing literature that has been surveyed, is used to confirm findings of this research, to indicate those that are unique to this study, as well as to indicate those that are found within the literature but not confirmed by this study (Woods & Catanzano, 1988), as it has been mentioned within this chapter.

4.3.1 Discussion of the findings concerning the widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process

Five main categories were found (as summarised in table 4.1). The Batswana widow:

- * Experiences feelings of isolation due to the stigmatization of widowhood;
- * Experiences stressful life due to the customs prescribed by society;
- * Experiences the support provided by internal and external support systems;
- * Experiences feelings of hopelessness resulting from the loss of the husband;
- * Experiences a sense of over-responsibility due to the absence of the partner.

4.3.1.1 Experiences feelings of isolation due to the stigmatization of widowhood

This main category, as indicated in column A of table 4.1, is divided into two sub-categories (indicated with a bullet (•)), as discussed below.

- **Experience of being shunned by society due to cultural beliefs associated with widowhood and the mourning process**

From the findings of this research it seems that the Batswana widows experience being shunned by society due to their cultural beliefs. These beliefs seem to contribute to the lack of the integration of the widows into the rest of society. The situation is reminiscent of the society shunning the widow and the widow's resultant experience of isolation.

In table 4.2 further categories are indicated with regard to the widow's experience of being shunned by society due to cultural beliefs. An asterisk (*) will be used to indicate the relevant further categories, and a dash (-) to indicate additional categories.

Table 4.2 Experience of being shunned by society due to cultural beliefs associated with widowhood and the mourning process

- * **Wearing of mourning clothes**
- * **Widows believed to be infested with bad luck (sefifi):**
 - Being feared for potential harm to the life of people, animals and crops.
 - People avoid contact due to fear of "contamination".
 - Widow cooked for and served by another widow.
 - Eating utensils separated from the rest.

* **Wearing of mourning clothes**

The widows interviewed expressed how they experienced isolation due to being stigmatized because of wearing mourning clothes. It was evident from these widows' responses that they felt uncomfortable in the black attire. Some would even prefer other colours just to decrease the stigma. This was confirmed by statements such as the following: "... I would rather put on brown or navy attire, it is not as bad as black." Following are examples of direct quotations from the transcriptions of interviews:

"Some of the friends start to stay away from you because of the 'rou' the mourning garments that you are wearing; these black garments, when you go to the taxis people do not want to sit next to you".

"Because if you wear anything black, everybody rejects you".

The feelings of being stigmatized because of wearing mourning clothes has been confirmed by Pincus (1974:176) who states that many widows feel rejected and isolated in their mourning attire. Parkes (in Kalish, 1985:207) and Bankoff (1983:836) also mention that widows, in addition to their difficulties of coping with grief and maintaining friendships, also suffer stigmatization. The concomitant sense of isolation is also confirmed by this researcher as the widows interviewed expressed their experiences of rejection, which they felt was aggravated by their black mourning clothes. Their experience was that they felt isolated whereas those widows who do not have to wear

mourning clothes do not get the same treatment.

The young widows in this study experienced black clothes even more intensely as a form of punishment. This finding is similar to what Gorer (in Parkes, 1986:179) states: that the customs of a mourning dress are now pre-dominantly maintained by the old, the poor and the unskilled. Even though young widows dislike black clothes, there is also evidence in this study that some of the widows who are older and not working did not mind wearing the black mourning clothes. The young and working widows viewed them as an inconvenience. An older widow who is not working said: ".. when you are a woman, being a widow, you must when you have lost a husband mourn with your appropriate attire ..." -- her experience was different from a young and working widow who said: "no one tells me that when you are a widow and putting on black things they draw the attention of people, and again the black clothes are binding because I mean you don't go anywhere, when you knock off you come straight home ..., they say you have got 'bad luck'."

* **Widows believed to be infested with bad luck ("sefifi")**

The Batswana widows expressed their experience of being isolated because the society believes that they are infested with "bad luck" ("sefifi"). People isolate them in an attempt to protect themselves from being infested. The behaviours that were shown in this regard are subsequently discussed as additional categories:

- **The widow is believed to be potentially harmful to the lives of other people, animals and crops**

Further experience of being shunned by society was explained by the widows as being influenced by the Batswana belief that widowhood holds potential harm to the lives of people, animals and crops. These beliefs seem to be threatening to most widows who felt that even though they did not share these beliefs, they were compelled to comply with the set rules simply to avoid being accused when anything went wrong. Some of the rules that they are compelled to observe include the notion that they may not come into contact with small children, sick people, cattle and crops. It is for this reason that they are not supposed to move around because it is believed that if the widow comes

into contact with small babies they may fall sick. Her tracks are viewed as equally dangerous: if a baby comes into contact with or crosses the widow's tracks it is said to be affected by "metlhala" (tracks). The same applies to cattle: it is believed that if they cross her tracks they may abort if they are pregnant. The widow is also prevented from going to the fields because her shadow will kill the crops according to this belief.

Widows who participated in this study expressed their feelings about these issues as follows:

"If you are a widow, you must, I mean according to the Batswana culture, like we have cattle at the farm, I cannot go there, isn't it because I am mourning, if they are pregnant they will abort".

"They have been taking me through these rituals of 'crossing the streets' so that I don't affect the animals and small children because according to them I am still a new widow who is supposed to be strictly indoors".

The researcher's observations in this regard was that some widows did not want to disclose these beliefs either because they feared that they could be ridiculed or because they assumed that the researcher is aware of them. Rosenblatt (*in* Stroebe *et al.*, 1993:109) states that the professional's perspective may seriously violate the norms of a bereaved person's culture or even that the researcher could be insensitive to the feelings and needs of the affected person. This researcher found these experiences to be seemingly common to Black South Africans: out of the literature consulted it is only Pauw (1990:76) whose study was conducted among the Black South Africans in isolated areas, and he confirms that widows are believed to be dangerous to small children, animals and crops. His findings differ with the findings of this research in the sense that he also suggests that the 'rituals danger' refers to the widows' adverse effects on the rainfall, divination set, medicines and activities like home beer brewing and pot making; however, these phenomena were not found in this research project.

- **People avoid contact due to fear of "contamination"**

The widows further expressed their experience of being avoided by people for the fear that they may be 'contaminated' by their 'bad luck'. This is revealed by the people's

behaviours of avoiding certain normal practices such as greeting with their hands. It is the Batswana's practice to greet each other by hand particularly if they have not seen each other for some time. However, this is restricted in the case of the widow because it is believed that such contact may carry a risk of transferring the "bad luck" on to other people, thus contaminating them. Other behaviours are that people avoid sitting next to widows in public transport. Widows who were interviewed expressed that their most painful experience was that even at their homes, their relatives or even family members were made to avoid contact with them. They expressed their experience in this regard as follows:

"Some people treat me well, some don't treat me well, they seem to be fearing me, they don't greet you by hand",

"... when you were giving me money for condolences for Mr E you were supposed to put it down"

"People's attitude seem to have changed; it seems as though you are no longer a real person to people or I can say it seems as though people dislike you. The same widow went on to say: I wanted to ask whether am I the one who is dead"

From the above quotations one infers that these widows seem to have felt humiliated by this behaviour but they had no choice but to accept it. These findings are similar to those found in Kalish (1985:209), Parkes (1986:179), Lopata (1988:127), Rosenblatt (*in* Stroebe *et al.*, 1993:108) and Van den Hoonaard (1997:54), who all confirm the experiences of the widows in their studies as being isolated because the society thought that they were unclean and would contaminate them. Widows in these studies mentioned that they were isolated even by their friends. The Batswana widow's experience is therefore not unique in this regard, although the above studies were undertaken among Western and European communities.

- Widow cooked for and served by another widow

Being cooked for and served by a specific person is also one of the customs experienced by widows in their mourning process. It was mentioned by the widows in the interviews that this person should also be a widow, and that the mother usually fits

this criterion and therefore she is usually this special person. The widows mentioned the following experiences in this regard:

"... it must be a specific somebody who have lost the husband who can cook for you"

"If you are a widow you must be served by your mother only, because most probably your mother is widowed".

The Batswana widow's experience of her meals being cooked by her mother or by a close relative who is widowed was not found in the literature, which mostly reflect western norms. Even the South African literature does not mention anything regarding this aspect, which therefore seems to be unique to this research.

- Eating utensils separated from the rest

To add to their experience of isolation due to the fear of contamination, the widows furthermore experienced that their eating utensils were separated from the rest of the family's utensils. These include the plates, mugs and cutlery used by the widow. The person who cooks for her is required to mark the utensils and keep them separately, together with the dish cloths that she will use, so that she does not contaminate the rest. This practice is not acceptable to the widows who, as quoted directly from the transcriptions of interviews, had the following to say in this respect:

"Ok, your eating utensils, they must not be washed with other things",

I have my own plate, which is not mixed with the others, even a dish cloth, it is not mixed with others".

"... you, must have your eating utensils, you must have your own dish"

The separation of eating utensils seems to be similar to that of the Shuswans of British Columbia as Cochcraine (in Parkes, 1986:28) as well as Pauw (1990:82) indicate. Both had evidence in their studies that the widow's eating utensils were separated from the others because she was believed to be 'contaminated' by death.

- **Experience of sense of being imprisoned due to discriminatory restrictions**

Table 4.3 indicate further categories which were identified during the process of data analysis, under the subcategory of the experience or sense of being imprisoned due to discriminatory restrictions. (An asterisk (*) will be used to indicate the further categories, and a dash (-) to indicate their additional divisioning).

Table 4.3 : Experience of sense of being imprisoned due to discriminatory restrictions

<p>* The widow is required to stay indoors for a specific period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The widow is not allowed to move freely; - The widow is not allowed to visit other households; - when compelled to leave home she is allowed to go to a particular place only and go straight back home; <p>* The widow is restricted from performing certain activities and social roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The widow is not supposed to attend social gatherings; - The widow must be home before sunset to set a candle alight in her bedroom; - The widow is not supposed to get involved in relationships with men; - The widow is not expected to talk freely to people; and - The mourning clothes are washed at night only.

Table 4.3. gives an overall impression of how widows experience the sense of being imprisoned because of the restrictions that they are subjected to. These restrictions which are viewed by the widows as discriminating them from the rest of the people are subsequently discussed, as follows:

- * **The widow is required to stay indoors for a specific period**

This further subcategory was identified because all the widows who participated in this research mentioned that for a specific period after the death of their husbands, they

were confined to their homes. The duration of this period differed from family to family, with the first three months being taken as critical for the widow to stay indoors. When she left home it was only for matters that required her personal attention such as dealing with the estate of the deceased. The reason that was given by the participating widows with regard to these restrictions was that it was believed that she was infested with "bad luck" from the death of her husband. Her tracks and shadow were therefore dangerous to small babies, animals and crops. The following are examples quoted directly from the transcriptions of the interviews with widows.

"I don't loiter around, I don't have that right, I'm still home bound".

"I must just stay home, it means I am in prison".

"You don't go anywhere having this bad luck".

The literature study carried out in this project indicate that being confined to the home is not unique to this research: Van den Hoonard (1994:124) and Parkes (1986:178) found that in the Jewish custom the widow was expected to "sit shiva" for a period of about seven days following the death of her husband. Pauw (1990:80) also observes in his research that the widow was prohibited from leaving her household for some weeks after the death had occurred.

- The widow is not allowed to move freely

In addition to being confined to her home the widow is not allowed to move freely in the area where she stays. The reasons stated for this by widows were, among others: that they will spread the bad luck that they are believed to be having; this bad luck is dangerous to the community especially children, cattle and crops (see table 4.3.1). The participating widows in this research further stated that for them to be able to go to work or attend to important matters, she should carry out certain rituals of spraying the road/s to be crossed by her with a special herb in order to neutralise the so-called 'rituals danger'. This would then be the route she would use so that she would not 'contaminate' the untreated routes. The following are examples of quotations extracted from the widows' interviews in this respect:

"According to the Batswana culture, they don't like to see a widow moving around in their homes you see ...".

"You don't go to the shops, you don't go anywhere".

".. now at home, you must stay for a period of three months ..."

From the above quotations it is evident that widows have no choice with regard to this restriction because they fear rejection, should they be seen to be moving around. They fear being blamed for any outcome believed to be caused by widows. Parkes and Weiss (in Jacob 1996:283) view the death of the spouse as a social loss which can often require major changes in lifestyle and role performance. These major role changes are evident with the widows having to remain at home and being prevented from moving to various places – thus suspending some of her social roles. The results of this research project indicate that even widows who did not honour other restrictions of widowhood, had to honour this one just to avoid being blamed by others. They even made defensive statements with regard to the fact that they are not allowed to move freely. The following are some of these statements:

"... I must not forget my responsibility in the house"; and

"... some people are far and they come later after the funeral, coming to bring condolences; now I take it that when they come they must find me at home, I mean mostly that is the reason".

This goes to show that even if widows may choose not to follow other rules, they feel threatened by some of these rules, such as this one. Parkes (1986:178) supports these findings because he finds that the Jewish observe a similar period of not moving freely in order to mark the beginning of the mourning process. This can be considered as partly supporting the findings of this study, though not clearly stated. This leads us to the next category, in which the widow is not allowed to visit other households.

- **The widow is not allowed to visit other households**

Most of the widows interviewed did not mention that for a period from the death of their

husbands until they were buried, they were not only confined to their homes but also confined to their bedrooms. This state of affairs could be due to the fact that participants took it for granted that it was known to the researcher since she is also part of their culture. The fact that it is common practice that a widow should not mix with other people, and that those coming to comfort her should find her in her bedroom, evidently restricts her movements. The restriction of not visiting other households as well as the period of restriction seem to differ among different families.

Some widows stated that they were allowed to visit others after three months, some after six months, whilst others were restricted for the entire period of their mourning which is twelve months. Some widows preferred not to visit at all even after the restriction had been lifted, because they feared being accused of wrongdoing in case something went wrong. The following quotations indicate the widows' views concerning this:

"... before the burial there are those restrictions that you don't go out of your bedroom, you lie on the mattress, you stay there with old people".

"Now even the 'rou' you restrict yourself; when I go to my friends or neighbours, I don't just enter, they must usher me with a piece of charcoal, or use ash until I have access to various households"

"I am not supposed to visit any house and I cannot talk to people".

A similarity to this finding is found in the study conducted by Pauw (1980:80) who states that the widow was only admitted ceremonially to every household that she wished to visit. In the case of the widows of this study, a piece of charcoal or ash was used for this purpose. In Pauw's study widows used grains of sorghum or maize, on which the widow blew before scattering them around and inside the house and the yard. She could then visit freely in future, although her movement remained restricted. This restriction is discussed under the heading of the following additional category:

- **When compelled to leave home the widow was allowed to go to a particular place only and went straight back home**

All the widows in this study mentioned that although their movements were restricted, there was some consideration of the circumstances when they were forced to leave home. Typical examples occurred in the case of working women, who had to be allowed to go to work sooner than the normal period that they are supposed to stay at home, prescribed. They also emphasized the fact that financial institutions like banks and insurance companies were some of the places where they were compelled to visit either before the funeral in order to get money for the burial or thereafter for the purposes of the settlement of the estate. These are some of the places which they had to visit, after which they had to go straight back home. The evidence of this from direct quotations reads as follows:

“Again they are binding because I mean you don’t go anywhere, when you knock off you come straight home ...”

“I just leave for church, on Thursday I go to a prayer meeting and come back home; I leave and go to town by reasons”.

“I said people hunger is striking in my family because whites do not know these Setswana things so if I don’t go to work my employers will think that I don’t need the job”. (said by the widow who pleaded to be allowed to go to work).

This experience is anticipated by Kastenbaum (1977:248) who reports that the widows in his study experienced forced confinement for some time before they could re-enter ordinary life. Kastenbaum (1977:247) further states that these widows were still uncomfortable about full blown mourning practices. Glick, Parkes and Weiss (in Kastenbaum, 1977:247) report that the inconvenience that the widows in their study experienced lead to their abandoning of mourning practices and that they gave different reasons for having done so. This could be considered as a common finding in studies of this nature, because widows in this study also mentioned that they were inconvenienced by these restrictions.

*** The widow is restricted from performing certain activities and social roles**

As far as this subcategory of the restriction of activities is concerned, this study found that widows were restricted from getting involved in social activities. The subsequent concise discussion will concentrate on additional sub-subcategories under the heading of this subcategory, as summarised in table 4.4:

- The widow is not supposed to attend social gatherings

One of the restrictions experienced by the widow is that she is not supposed to attend social gatherings. During her mourning process, she is not expected to attend parties, meetings, funerals and other community and social gatherings. The belief attached to this restriction is once again her "unclean" state and the "bad luck" she is believed to be "infested" with; it is feared that she may transfer these to other people and affect them through intermingling, leading to illness or death in their families. The widows who participated in this research project expressed this experience as rejection, but even if most of them did not share the belief, they chose to stay away from such gatherings for the fear of being rejected if they did attend. The participating widows said they experienced that it was most frustrating to be prevented from attending church services. They explained their frustration as being aggravated by the fact that they considered the church as their main source of spiritual support which they needed during their mourning process. The bitterness that they experienced was expressed in the following direct quotations from the transcriptions of interviews:

"It is painful; I can see all these but about where I am supposed to be comforted! remember that I must stay for three months before I can go to church".

"... you know you feel like a prisoner but as people come, especially those who have experienced this they will tell you 'no man' it's temporary ... the load becomes relieved when you join the prayer group again ...".

This particular restriction from attending social gatherings is not found in the existent literature on these matters, and it could therefore be considered as a unique finding of

this study. Pincus (1974:176) and Van den Hoonaard (1994:125), however, do state that widows who were interviewed for their studies complained that they were rejected by friends. Even the family friends had refrained from inviting them to the dinner gatherings that they used to enjoy together. This impacted negatively on the widows because in their community, going out to dinner was an important sign that one was accepted in that society (Van den Hoonaard, 1994:126). Van den Hoonaard's study therefore confirms that although widows in the western culture are not restricted from going to social gatherings, they are not completely accepted by society either.

- **The widow must be home before sunset in order to set a candle alight in her bedroom**

According to the Batswana culture when someone has died, their clothes are immediately taken out of the wardrobes and tied into a bundle. This bundle is put somewhere in the corner of the bedroom and a candle is kept burning until the day of the funeral. The widow also stays in the bedroom where she lies on the bed or on the mattress. The day after the funeral the clothes are washed and those that are clean or not washable are sprinkled with "muti". If it is the husband who died the widow should keep this candle alight every evening from sunset to sunrise. She continues with this practice until the time when the clothes will be given away. The widows interviewed did not disclose such details, again because they possibly took it for granted that the researcher knows that it is the belief that the candle is kept alight in order to honour the spirit of the dead person. It is for this reason that they must be home by sunset. The following are the widows' verbal statements with regard to being compelled to be home before sunset, as quoted once again from the interviews:

"No, at this time (around five o'clock) I must be at home, I must put the candle light on for my husband's clothes, because they are not yet distributed".

"When you are from work you have to come straight home so that before sunset you are home".

One of the interviews was conducted late in the afternoon and by the end of the session the widow was already worried that it was time to set the candle alight. This custom

practised among the Batswana people was not found in the existing literature, so it should be considered as a unique finding of this study.

- **The widow is not supposed to get involved in relationships with men**

A widow is further prevented from engaging in any relationships with men, because sexual contact with a man is believed to be fatal to him. Culturally it is believed that her blood is 'hot' hence she is considered to be dangerous to men and that she could cause swelling of the man's feet and abdomen (a disease known as "boswagadi") which is believed to be fatal if not treated promptly. The custom of cleansing or 'washing' as stated by Pauw (1990:80) is considered to be a preventive measure where it is believed that the widow's blood is being cleansed of "bad luck". Pauw (1990:80) explained that according to his study, the widow is deliberately treated with the hoof of a cow which has been slaughtered for her husband's funeral. This hoof is treated with medicine and thereafter tapped on her body and head in order to make it dangerous for any man who may have sex with her, according to this belief. This practice was not mentioned by widows in this study.

Direct quotations from the interviews with the widows indicate how they feel about being prevented from having a relationship during mourning:

"I must not say for instance if any man comes in and say 'I want to see you, I want to talk to you', it's not my business, it means I am really not mourning".

"You are not supposed to meet any man because this man will become sick, swelling of feet, urine problem".

"Even when you are walking on the street and you see men standing there it is difficult for you to greet them".

One of the widows was confident enough to explain the pathophysiology of the illness ("boswagadi") according to her beliefs: "so at that time when you have sex your blood is exchanged; so when your blood is exchanged throughout when another one is not there, he is no longer there so when you just stay I have a belief that his blood is bad luck in me," and further: "I think it is an infection that is not treated, so it affects your

kidneys and they block”.

Most widows felt that they have to comply with this rule, some of them not because they believed that they would cause death to the male partner, but out of respect to their late husband, by way of observing the rules of mourning. They also felt comfortable that they would be readily accepted by society if they do so.

Evidence from the literature surveyed, indicate that it may be in the Black culture that widows are believed to be dangerous like in Pauw’s (1990:80) study. There is no evidence of such beliefs in the research conducted among White communities. Van den Hoonaard (1994:126) and Kalish (1985:208) only indicate the fact that the widow is avoided but with no suspicions that she may be dangerous. Flint (1990:11) also state that men may not feel free to go closer to the widow for the fear that they will be regarded as being too intimate, too soon.

- **The widow is not expected to talk freely to people**

One of the restrictions further identified within this study is that the widow is not expected to talk to people freely, especially during the initial period of mourning. Participating widows expressed that this was frustrating. Some, relating their experience, mentioned that they were frustrated to an extent of being angry. They viewed it as logically impossible to get harmed from talking to a person. Widows therefore concluded that it is an ungrounded belief or a means of control aimed at denying them an opportunity to talk to people, particularly men thus preventing the risk of their becoming involved. Examples of these frustrations are offered in the following direct quotations from the transcripts accumulated within this study:

“I am not supposed to visit any house and I cannot talk to people”.

“I must not go around, I must not talk to you, I must talk to you ...(with anger), I mean it does not benefit you anything”

“I can’t see their reaction because I don’t talk to them”.

This particular restriction from talking to people is not confirmed by existent literature

about widowhood. This finding could therefore also be regarded as unique to this research project.

- **Mourning clothes are washed at night only**

All the widows interviewed, except the three who did not wear mourning clothes, mentioned that they had to wash their mourning clothes at night. This stems from the fact that traditionally she is supposed to have only one set of mourning clothes. She could then only get an opportunity to wash them at night as she had to wear them continuously during the day. Another reason for washing them at night is because of a belief that the widow carries bad luck, also on her black clothes, and that hanging them during the day will further spread the bad luck or even cause death to people who see them. Widows who participated in this research had the following to say along these lines:

“Yes you must hang them up at about six and by at least nine you hang them inside so that in the morning you put them on”.

“They are not supposed to be washed during the day because people must not see them, they are believed to be a bad omen, they call for another death”.

The literature survey indicates that wearing black clothes, as described by Feinstein and Mayo (1990:128), is part of the mourning process of the Orthodox Jewish tradition. How the mourning clothes are treated, their being washed at night and burnt at the end of the mourning process, seems to be a unique finding of this research project.

4.3.1.2 Experiences stressful life due to customs prescribed by society

Column B of table 4.1 deals with the second major category which is the widows' experience of stress caused by customs prescribed by society. Widowhood and the mourning process of the Batswana people is dominated by culture, involving not only the family but the community at large. This is divided into two subcategories, namely:

- Experience of the need to fulfil the customs as expected by society during the mourning process; and

- Experience of disruption of family relationships.
- **Experience of the need to fulfill the customs expected by society during the mourning process**

Table 4.4 indicate further categories identified during data analysis under the experience of the need to fulfil the customs expected by society during the process of mourning. An asterisk (*) will be used to indicate further categories identified under this sub-category, and a dash (-) to indicate additional categories. These will be summarised in a table form and then discussed individually, with literature confirmation.

Table 4.4 : Experience of the need to fulfill the customs expected by society during the mourning process

<p>* Undergoing the cleansing process.</p> <p>* The widow's responsibility to maintain her own and the family's reputation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The widow is expected to observe rules of mourning as a sign of self respect. - Display good behaviour as a sign of respect for her late husband.
--

* **Undergoing the cleansing process**

It has been mentioned earlier in this chapter that the widow in the Batswana society is believed to be infested with bad luck ("sefifi"). Immediately after the husband has passed away the woman should undergo a cleansing process. This involves drinking of herbal mixtures ("dipitsa"). Herbs are prepared by the person who cooks for her and they are believed to cleanse her blood. Herbs used for washing are believed to neutralise the bad luck. The process continues for a certain period as determined by the one responsible for her cleansing, usually a traditional doctor or her uncle. This process ultimately renders her clean and free from the danger of harming people, animals and crops. Examples of the widows' statements were expressed as follows:

"So they brought somebody who came to cleanse me and give me those

traditional herbs, took me to the cross roads because I gave in, wanting to go to work”

“... they call a traditional healer to do that, wash this bad luck of your husband, then you are out of that”.

The cleansing of the widow is also discussed by Pauw (1990:79) who stated that immediately after the burial of her husband, the widow has to undergo a general washing of hands and sprinkling of feet with water treated with a plant believed to neutralise the effects of ritual danger. This is confirmation that the belief is shared by black South Africans as evident in the literature.

* **The widow’s responsibility to maintain her own and the family’s reputation**

This further category was identified during data analysis because it appeared that most widows were concerned about maintaining the dignity of their husband’s household name after their death. This is done by mourning according to culturally prescribed rules. When she follows the rules the in-laws are happy and feel proud whereas if she does not, she disgraces the in-laws name because the people will talk and even complain about her lack of observance of the cultural mourning process. Some widows therefore, followed the rules even if they did not believe in culture, for the sake of maintaining the family dignity. The following two additional categories explain this further category:

- **The widow is expected to observe the rules of mourning as a sign of respect**

During data analysis it was identified that most widows emphasized having to respect themselves and their in-laws, as well as their children by following the mourning process as set for them. Non-compliance with the rules cause the experience of guilt feelings.

The following quotations illustrate their experience:

“So according to his culture it is a must, and according to that culture I’m

supposed to wear them for a year ...”

“... but she told me they will say a lot about this, ignore them, just sit down and mourn for my child. I mean your husband”.

These above mentioned quotations seem to suggest that according to the Batswana culture when one has lost a husband, following the process of mourning as prescribed culturally is a sign of respect for yourself and the in-laws. It also appears from the researchers observations that other widows comply to avoid gossip by the community, which might be destructive to the widow's reputation. Frude (1991:345) in support of this experience stated that the family members usually follow or comply with certain cultural norms prescribed for a period of mourning; habits like wearing black vary greatly from culture to culture and from one historical period to another. Frude (1991:345) further believes that there is a range of permitted actions and strong injunctions about how the bereaved should and should not behave following a loss. From this literature there is some evidence that the need to follow the rules of mourning is not unique to this study.

- **The widow should display good behaviour as a sign of respect for her late husband**

This further category emerged from data analysis and relates to the previous discussion. It was realised that most widows were conscious about the good behaviour as a sign of respect for their late husbands. The focus of this good behaviour seemed to be the avoidance of remarriage. The following are examples of the widows' experience, quoted directly from the transcriptions:

“I must not say for instance if any man comes in and say ‘I want to see you, I want to talk to you’, it's not my business; it means that I'm really not mourning, I do not respect this man”

“So the second marriage is another disturbance to our children, it interferes, it ... interferes with our relationship”.

Most of the widows who emphasized that they had to avoid remarriage were observed

to be talking fondly about their late husbands, hence they felt they did not want to disappoint them, either by pleasing their in-laws or children. De Garmo and Kitson (1996:994) reported that in their study of widowed women compared with divorced ones, they found that the former evaluated their husbands positively as opposed to the latter.

This literature support the findings of this study, of widows avoiding re-marrying for fear of being accused that they do not respect their late husbands. This is therefore not unique to this study.

- **Experience of disruption of family relationships**

Table 4.5 summarises further categories under the abovementioned sub category, of the experience of disruption of family relationships.

Table 4.5: Experience of disruption of family relationships

<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The widow is blamed for the death of husband.* The in-laws take control of the situation by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- making too many prescriptions;- uttering negative statements;- demanding to be given part of the estate.

- * **The widow is blamed for the death of husband**

This further category was identified by both the researcher and co-coder because the majority of widows interviewed for this study experienced disturbed relationships with their in-laws. This is apparently caused by their bitterness about their son's death. Lack of acceptance of death lead to the questioning of its cause and the wife is the nearest target to blame because she is the closest person to her late husband. Widows mentioned that it is a common allegation among the Batswana people that when a husband dies the wife is suspected of being responsible. The following are examples of direct quotations from the interviews, which indicate the widows' experience with regard to these allegations:

"... the in-laws can frustrate you, they have a lot to say and according to our belief the blacks, when the husband dies the wife has contributed, but when the wife dies

no, it is normal”.

“Other persons see you as having money because many a times when the man dies, it is said that you know about his death”.

*“So even after the funeral, since they were gone they never communicated”
(meaning the in-laws).*

Lopata (1988:115) found in his study conducted in America that the widows' relationships with their in-laws often deteriorate after the death of their husbands. Though the widows in this study stated that the strained relationships with their in-laws are caused by being suspected of having contributed to the death of their husbands, Lopata's study did not state what caused the deterioration in the relationship.

* **In-laws take control of the situation**

Owing to the bitterness that the in-laws have against the widow, some usually refrain from helping with funeral arrangements. Even if they do not assist financially as stated by the widows, they take control of the situation. This is done in the following ways that will be discussed in three additional categories:-

- **Making too many prescriptions**

This additional category was identified because some widows mentioned that their in-laws are too prescriptive. This contributes to the unpleasantness as expressed in the following quotations:

One widow said she caught them gossiping:

“We must talk to this lady so that she must get her mourning clothes ready now”

“On the day of the funeral they gave them to me to put on, those black clothes”.

Widows mentioned that the in-laws take advantage of their helpless state and that they cannot oversee what is happening in the house because they are restricted from moving around. They then prescribe rules indiscriminately, some of which are not directly

communicated to the widow but to her children or close support systems. This attitude of the in-laws taking control by prescribing many rules has been supported by Brothers (in Van den Hoonaard, 1997:542) who though his study was not done among the Batswana, discovered that the widow is somehow viewed as less fortunate and therefore she is less respected, as a result families treat her with less consideration. This tends to influence their prescriptions of rules, a finding which is not unique to this study.

- **Uttering negative statements**

The negative utterances by the widows' in-laws originate from the bitterness that they have with regard to their child's death. In cases where they do not have grounds to accuse the widow, they would rather pass negative remarks as the following quotations from the widows indicate:

"... even if they don't talk directly you hear you know, they pass remarks you know".

"I am afraid of indirect talks" and "yes they would be satisfied because now they think I am not hurt ..." (meaning when she puts on mourning clothes)

Though Lopata (1988:115) supported an aspect of withering relationships with the in-laws, there is no evidence in literature with regard to uttering negative statements. These negative accusatory remarks may be considered to be a unique finding to this study.

* **Demanding to be given part of the estate**

This is also another common practice among the Batswana people that when a man dies, his family would demand that the widow give them a share of the estate. This is one contributory factor to strained relationships. The following quotations from the widows' experience is evidence of the prevailing situation:

"They will tell you that my brother had this and this, we need so much ..." and Awe

want share, after my brother's death why can't we get share ..."

"After the death now they are running up and down there, they want monies".

"As I can see now all this misunderstanding between me and my in-laws is because of money".

"Like his family, to show that they do not sympathise with me and that they were expecting his belongings, they say I must give them the bedroom suite".

These experience of demands made by the in-laws to be given part of the estate were not confirmed by the literature, and therefore unique findings to this study.

4.3.1.3 Experience of the support provided by internal and external support systems

The third major category as stated in column C of Table 4.1 has been identified as experience of the support provided by internal and external support systems. This will be discussed in two sub-categories namely:

- Experience feelings of being supported during bereavement; and
- experience of spiritual support based on strong Christian beliefs.
- **Experience feelings of being supported during bereavement**

From the interviews with widows it seems as though they experienced some support during their widowhood and the mourning process.

Table 4.6 Experience feelings of being supported during bereavement

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">* support by own family members.* support by friends, neighbours and others. |
|---|

*** Support by own family members**

The widows who participated in this study acknowledged that during their bereavement

they received more support from their own families. The support was in the form of money as well as emotional support. Immediate own family members of widows were found to be their parents, siblings, aunts and uncles. In the Batswana culture, an uncle is particularly important because there are special roles that he plays during the time of death because he is the one who can carry out certain rituals. The following are the widows' experience as quoted directly from the interviews:

"The support you will get it from your own parents, but the in-laws, ooh!"

"Even my sisters' children are here most of the time and I send them".

With regard to the literature confirmation of the support of widows, Bankoff (1983:831) and Lopata (1988:116) support the view that own family members or parents can offer better support during the early period of bereavement. In cases where the widow is older, children may play an important role in supporting their mothers with carrying out household tasks as discussed by Lopata (1988:116). This literature further confirms the experience of widows with older children, who stated that the children were able to organise household tasks, like being driven to several places if she cannot drive. This finding is common to other studies as confirmed by the abovementioned studies.

* **Support by friends, neighbours and other people**

The support that widows get from their neighbours, friends and other community members form an external support system. It is culturally expected within the Batswana that when there is death in a household the community members visit to help with household tasks, which include cooking. People who come frequently to comfort the bereaved are served with food and/or drinks.

Widows who participated in this study expressed that they also received help from their neighbours, friends and other community members. Their appreciation was expressed in the following direct quotations from interviews:

"Ok! Neighbours, like now they come and stay with me; even when I have a problem at times they take my child ..."

“Yes I mean neighbours, friends and church members, they often come to me, they check on me and as we talk I forget”.

The literature confirmation of external support systems has been stated by Gass and Chang (in Jacob, 1996:283) as discussed in the literature study (see 3.3.5.1). They viewed the external support system as having a positive impact on the outcome of bereavement. In their studies involving the adjustment to the impact of loss, Pellman (1992:261) and Siegel and Kuykendall (1990:132) observed that widows who were well integrated into the community adjusted faster to the loss of their husbands than those who did not have the external support. This is also true for this study that those widows who were supported appeared to be coping better than those who had no support.

*** Experience of spiritual support based on strong Christian beliefs**

Table 4.7 below indicate the further categories under the subcategory of the widows' experience of spiritual support based on strong Christian beliefs.

Table 4.7 Experience of spiritual support based on strong Christian beliefs

<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The belief that everything has been planned by God;* Reassurance that God will take care of the situation;* The widow's trust in the church as a strong support system

*** The belief that everything has been planned by God**

This further category was realised when all the widows who participated in this study stated that they rely upon God as their main pillar of support. During data analysis it became obvious that all widows trusted in God as their major spiritual comforter. All widows believed that God is the creator and when death strikes, their faith give them consolation that the dead person is under the care of God. This was observed to be based on the Batswana widows' strong Christian faith. The following direct quotations from transcriptions of interviews indicate the faith that widows have in their God:

“Yes, it's God who has done it and there is nothing that I can do because he was

not killed by any person”.

“God has taken my husband but eh, it has been a light you know, today I know how to run my family”.

The literature confirmation of this was confirmed by Siegel and Kuykendall (1990:130) who found that widows belonging to a church experienced less impact of loss. All the widows interviewed for this study were observed to possess that strong faith in God and this seemed to have played an important role in lessening the emotional pain of death. This finding is not unique to this study.

* **Reassurance that God will take care of the situation**

This further category was also identified because widows showed strength in dealing with the situation of mourning and bereavement. On assessing the source of strength widows were found to be spiritually grounded with an intense faith in God. Their self reassurance as quoted below was impressive:

“But now that God is still with me, even where I saved or where I am saving, when there is a need I am able to get something”.

“... so let us just say that with God’s help, we know that He’s there whether you believe or not, He can help you”.

“Now it needs a woman who knows God, who prays, yes because as the word of God says that Jehovah is the husband of widows, your needs, you direct them to God ... this heaviness, you become consoled”.

This strong religious belief has been supported by Stroebe et al. (1993:31) that faith plays an important role in bereavement because the people’s belief in God contributes to making them stronger during their time of mourning. This belief and strength however, differs according to individual widows as stated by Cowles (1996:288), whose view is that the widows’ belief and strength differ from widow to widow. It is true for this study that widows showed various degrees of their strength and belief in accepting that death is God’s deed. This finding is common to other studies as confirmed above.

* **The widows' trust in the church as a strong support system**

This further category is an indication that because of the widows christianity they strongly expressed their trust in the church as their most important spiritual support. From the time of death until the burial the church usually gives the widows spiritual support by way of holding services and prayers to comfort the bereaved. It is during this stage that widows seemed to have developed a positive attitude towards widowhood and mourning, thus making it easier for them to cope. The following quotations from interviews indicate also the relief that they experienced after re-joining the church:

"... and it is only there where you are going to feel now here the church has accepted me (with a low tone) I'm praying with others and they accept me then you join them".

"Yes I mean the neighbours and friends and the church members, they often come to me, they check on me and as we talk I forget".

It was discussed under the further category of the widow's experience of being restricted from attending social gatherings and the church was mentioned as one of them. Quotations under that further category also indicated the widows' bitterness with regard to being prevented from attending the church during part of their mourning process. From the above quotations it is evident that they had a strong need of spiritual fulfilment.

This is confirmed by Stroebe et al. (1993:31) who state that the people's belief in God makes them stronger when they believe that heaven is a resting place and that it is God's will for one to die. This is a common finding as confirmed by literature.

4.3.1.4 The experience of feelings of hopelessness resulting from loss of husband

The fourth major category identified through data analysis as indicated in table 4.1 (Column D) is the widows' experience of feelings of hopelessness resulting from loss of husband. The widows' experience in this regard are discussed under two subcategories namely:

- Experience of loss of emotional support of husband;

- Experience of feelings of unworthiness due to loss of father figure.
- **Experience of loss of emotional support of husband**

Table 4.8 below indicates further categories with regard to the widows' experience of loss of emotional support of their husbands.

Table 4.8 Experience of loss of emotional support of husband

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The widow lacks someone to talk to; * Relatives disappear very soon after the burial; * The in-laws aggravate the situation with their bitterness; * Friends and neighbours are afraid to visit; * The widow experiences emotional pain due to loss of love: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - she will never see nor enjoy his company anymore; - she has nobody to share domestic responsibilities with. * The widow experiences difficulty in accepting the death of husband. * The widow experiences emotional outbursts.
--

* **The widow lacks someone to talk to**

The widows indicated in their loss of emotional support that there is a need to talk to someone. They also emphasized that talking to children is not sufficient and does not replace that need. This was even more serious with widows whose children are very young like the one who had only one child who is two years old. The following are the widows words quoted directly from transcriptions of interviews:

“Even here you know that you need someone to talk to ...”

“... even what you used to talk with him, you will never see it again, yes it means it is painful”. “... we used to joke together, we used to have a lot of jokes, ‘tell me about what was happening throughout the day’, and now there is nobody to say all these to”.

The widow's lack of someone to talk to is viewed by Jacob (1996:281) and Cowles (in Jacob, 1996:288) as an emotional impact of loss. The extent of loss is determined by what was normal emotional support amongst the two of them. The fact that children do not fulfil this need is also confirmed in literature by Parkes (in Bankoff, 1983:836), that widows may try to feel strong by avoiding expressing their feelings to their children; they therefore close meaningful communication thereby preventing any support they may get from them.

* **Relatives disappear very soon after the burial**

This concern was also expressed by most widows as contributing to their loss of emotional support. It has been mentioned earlier on that the widow's coping ability is dependent on all the means of support that she receives from those around her. It is common practice that immediately after the death of someone, relatives, friends and neighbours come closer to the bereaved to provide the necessary support. Widows complained that as soon as the person is buried all those people are no longer there, and the grief is re-experienced. Their experience in this regard is evident in the following quotations from interviews:

"... after the funeral, on Saturday they were all gone, up to now".

"the pathetic part is after the burial, now people are going back to their homes and most people they don't allow you to enter their houses".

"At times when you come to your senses you realise that you are alone, ... your grief deepens".

Bankoff (1983:836) found that the widow may be stigmatized by her counterparts for having lost a partner. It may be for this reason that they would no longer associate with her as it was found by Van Den Hoonaard (1994:129). In his study Adolph (1996:20) on the other hand confirmed that peers can bolster strength and coping while preventing regression. Pellmann (1992:253) confirmed that significant others can withdraw from the widow as it has been the case in this study with widows' relatives leaving them alone.

* **The in-laws aggravate the situation with their bitterness**

The widows in this study felt that their grief has been aggravated by the in-laws' bitterness with regard to their sons' death. The situation is made difficult by the fact that when a man has died, his family is the one that adopt a major role in arranging the funeral. This then creates a stumbling block because even if the widow's family may be prepared to assist, they get prevented from handling issues which culture requires that the husband's family handles. The frustration experienced by the widows in this regard can be identified in the following direct quotations:

"They loose their faith that by the way that in this world we pass, God will call us at any time. So you find that this way, no one is giving you the support".

"... we blacks, when the husband dies, the wife is always blamed; even if they don't talk directly, you hear, they pass remarks you know, 'why my brother, why should my brother travel so much, he was working for her'".

This is unique for this study because there was no evidence in literature about the widow being accused for the death of her husband or being illtreated by the in-laws. The rejection of the widow by friends and the community as stated by Van den Hoonaard (1994:125) happened because they dissociated themselves from the widows, to avoid the support that they could require.

• **Friends and neighbours are afraid to visit**

As stated previously that the widows' friends and neighbours may not feel free to visit her, this seems to contribute to her feelings of lack of emotional support. The customs are such that one is never sure of what to do which leaves the widow with loneliness and grief. This is evident as said by the widows interviewed for this study:

"What I have experienced really, you feel that there'll be few, very few friends, this is the time that you are going to see the friends indeed, because some of them they re afraid of these garments you are wearing".

"They don't have time for you, as if you know, as if they dislike you, as if they are

not comfortable with you”.

These statements show that even if some community members may wish to visit the widow they are afraid to do so. Rosenblatt (*in* Stroebe, 1993:108), confirmed this finding in his study that at times community members may isolate the bereaved family because they fear doing or saying wrong things. Parkes (1986:14) also supports that the bereaved is usually confronted by a stigma which makes the community to change their attitude towards the person. He also explained that widows in particular, become deserted because even friends tend to be embarrassed in their presence.

* **The widow experiences emotional pain due to loss of love**

The widow's experience of emotional pain has been explained to be caused by the following, which form the two additional categories, as indicated in table 4.8:

- She will never see nor enjoy his company anymore;
- She has nobody to share domestic responsibilities with;
- **She will never see nor enjoy his company anymore**

It was evident during interviews that widows experienced the emotional pain caused by the fact that they will never see their husbands anymore. The bitterness of that pain is evident in the following words quoted directly from interviews:

“When I say it is difficult to accept I mean if, like when a husband has died, it is difficult to accept that he has died, you will never see him again”

“... we used to attend funerals, we used to visit the relatives; after his eh ... departure I felt very lonely and I did not have somebody to take me all round”.

There is evidence in the literature which supports that loss of a spouse is a major cause of distress as stated by Jacob (1996:282), De Garmo and Kitson (1996:1994), Eells *et al.* (1995:270), Kastenbaum (1977:243), Leick and Davidsen-Nielsen (1991:64), and Sable (1989:554). All these authors confirm the widow's emotional pain as justifiable because of the attachment to her husband. This causes anxiety because she thinks of

the loss of love and company. Some of the widows showed obvious distress as they expressed themselves.

- **The widow has nobody to share domestic responsibilities with**

This additional category was realised because the majority of widows mentioned that their emotional pain is also caused by losing someone with whom they shared domestic responsibilities. The widows expressed this loss in the following words quoted directly from transcriptions of interviews:

“Even problems there is nobody to help me solve them ...; a big gap has really opened in this house”.

“At church, my family problems, eh ... I mean family matters, you know he was so supportive, he was a friend really; I have lost a friend indeed, my brother, my father ... everything”.

The literature confirmation of this experience is that the bitterness expressed by widows of having nobody to share domestic responsibilities with is a typical effect of widowhood, as stated by Bankoff (1993:829). Eells *et al.* (1995:270) confirmed that loss of a spouse is traumatic in that it entails also loss of an economic partner, companion and fellow parent. Most widows indeed expressed the financial strain they experience after the death of a spouse. Kalish (1985:208) also confirmed that widows in his study reported having problems with making decisions and doing things on their own.

* **The widow experiences difficulty in accepting the death of husband**

The experience of difficulty to accept that their husbands are dead was frequently expressed by widows during the interviews. This was experienced in various ways, such as denial, dreams of seeing him alive and imaginations. The following direct quotations clarify some of the widows experience:

“You know even, I have accepted that he is dead but I still think that he will come back”. “I mean, even yesterday when the plates were on the table I counted them

and I said 'daddy' and they laughed at me ..."

"I'm having that fear, imagining as though I will see him, I really don't know what it is". "At times you seem to see his image, as though you can see him and talk to him ..."

In support of the above information, widows who participated in the study conducted by Van den Hoonaard (1997:540) are said to have reacted with shock, bitterness and anger at being called "widow". This can be considered as an indication of denial because they did not want to be associated with widows. Some widows have experienced this denial through preoccupation with thoughts of the dead husband as stated by Blythe (in Baumann, 1998:123).

The manifestation of denial is not unique to this study as Kalish (1985:188) and Kubler - Ross (in Wright, 1991:61) also included denial as one of the phases of the mourning process. Schulz (1978:148) mentioned that as part of denial the bereaved may actually call out for the lost spouse and expect a response especially with those who died suddenly. Although two of the widows' husbands died suddenly in this study, none of them mentioned that she once called out for the lost spouse.

*** Widow experiences emotional outbursts**

Emotional outburst were also mentioned by widows during interviews. Although the widows think that they have come to terms with the fact that their husbands are dead, they do experience emotional pain leading to episodes of crying. The following quotations from the interviews verify these emotional outbursts:

"It is not that even now my tears ran dry, at times I do cry bitterly, but crying alone ..."

"I usually pretend so that they don't realize that I am hurt because it is painful, because if I do that they will also feel uncomfortable that they hurt me".

"... I can see that they feel pity for me, you then start crying, thinking about his life, imagining it".

The widow who lost her son and thereafter a husband could not contain herself when she related the trauma she had experienced:

“Ya! In my bedroom, you know at time I become so emotional, then after I have cried and talked to them ...”.

The emotional outburst of widows is a proof of what Sable (1989:553) revealed that grief lasts longer than one could believe and that it manifests with a range of feelings including sadness, anger, fear and anxiety. Sadness could be considered as an account of emotional outbursts. This experience is also confirmed by Kalish (1985:188) who found that grieving is associated with depressive symptoms, which Siegel and Kuykendall (1990:519) also supports. Jacob (1996:284) also acknowledged that this type of emotional distress is typical during the first phase of mourning which occurs during the first four months after death. This is also confirmed as a phase of mourning as described by Degner (*in* Schoenberg, 1980:19), Horowitz (*in* Eells *et al.*, 1995:272), Schut *et al.* (1997:66) and Kleinke (1991:129).

- **Experiences feelings of unworthiness due to the loss of father figure**

Table 4.9 below focuses on further categories with regard to the abovementioned sub category, of the widows' experience of feelings of unworthiness due to loss of father figure.

Table 4.9 Experience feelings of unworthiness due to loss of father figure

<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Loss of dignity and feelings of inadequacy:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The widow feels light and empty;- The widow feels insecure and unprotected;- The widow experiences difficulty in disciplining the children.* Experience of stress related symptoms:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- psychological symptoms;- physical symptoms.* Experience of loss of financial security:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The widow fears future financial survival due to loss of breadwinner;- She fears for future education of children.

* **Loss of dignity and feelings of inadequacy**

There was evidence during the interviews that the widows experience loss of dignity and feelings of inadequacy. This further category will be discussed in three additional categories as indicated in table 4.9 namely:

- widow feels light and empty;
- widow feels insecure and unprotected;
- widow experiences difficulty in disciplining the children
- **The widow feels light and empty**

More than half of the widows interviewed for this study reported feeling light and empty due to loss of dignity. This loss of dignity and feelings of being inadequate were said to be a result of loss of someone who gave them the dignity and sense of worth. These feelings were expressed in the following words quoted directly from transcriptions of interviews:

"... you are not able to accept that immediately; to think as if everybody seeing you perceives you as a paper, as if you are no longer worth anything".

"Feeling light means that, I don't know, I think it is because your husband has been giving you the dignity; now that he is no longer there, you don't have that dignity any more".

The widow's feeling of lightness and emptiness has been confirmed by literature where De Garmo and Kitson (1996:985) stated that many women value the status of being married and with the death of the husband the status is lost and this goes with the subsequent loss of identity. Pellman (1992:253) also found in her study, that there is loss of status when the woman becomes widowed. The loss of status therefore contribute to the feelings of emptiness and unworthiness, which are also confirmed by Van den Hoonaard (1997:540) and Fulton and Bendiksen (1976:410) in their studies which found that lack of recognition of widows resulted from having lost their husbands.

- **The widow feels insecure and unprotected**

This additional category was identified when the widows interviewed for this study repeatedly reported their feelings of insecurity. Their experience was that the man is a shield in the home so when he is no longer there, one feels insecure and unprotected. This sense of insecurity seems to be aggravated by the crime rate that is predominant in our community; this was realised as one widow expressed with fear and anger, the insecurity she experienced when a strange man visited her a few days after her husband's funeral. The following are the words she used which express insecurity with regard to men visiting when they did not before she became a widow. *"My husband has been here, why did he not come to cut those pieces of trees he claims he's going to plant elsewhere?"*.

The following direct quotations from interviews are also examples of how the widows expressed their feelings of insecurity:

"Really men are the people who are protecting us at home; even the home seems very light without a man".

"... even now I am scared because I cannot go to the toilet alone in the evening".

"... now that is lacking and I feel insecure now".

These concerns by the widows has also been found by Adolph (1996:20), in his study of older widows. The study found that widows panic that they cannot face life alone, after the loss of their husbands.

- **The widow experiences difficulty in disciplining the children**

Widows in this study mentioned among other things that they experience difficulty in disciplining their children. From what they said, it is implied that the father in the Batswana context is a stronger person when it comes to the discipline of children. After the death of a husband, the widow finds herself in the situation where she is supposed to maintain that role. The children tend not to take note of what their mother says to them because she has not been dominant in enforcing discipline. This is what they had to say about the discipline of children:

"... you find that when you are a widow, even children start to be delinquent, causing noise for you ...".

"I fail to discipline them like their father used to do"

This aspect of the widows' experience of difficulty in disciplining the children could not be confirmed by literature, therefore it is a unique finding of this study.

* **Experience of stress related symptoms**

This further category of the widow's experience of symptoms that are associated with stress will be discussed as divided into two additional categories namely:

- psychological symptoms experienced by the widow;
- physical symptoms experienced by the widow.

- **Psychological symptoms experienced by the widow**

Among the problems that the widows reported during interviews with them, psychological symptoms of stress were found to be outstanding. Widows expressed varying feelings of tension leading to crying which the researcher associated with depressed feelings. Some of the examples as quoted from transcriptions were

expressed as follows:

"... my heart is still crying for him, I have not reached the stage of healing my heart".

"At times when I think about this I become emotional, I ... I cry".

"Yes! and I decided to go to the doctor and the doctor said that I was ill and that I was depressed". "You know, my feelings are hurt at all times".

The psychological stress-related symptoms experienced by the widows are confirmed in the literature by Bankoff (1983:828), Farberow *et al.* (1992:107), Holmes and Rahe (*in* Stroebe *et al.*, 1993:196) and Adolph (1994:20). All these researchers found that loss of a spouse is the most stressful life event that carries a high risk of psychopathology.

In the study conducted by Zisook and Shuchter (1991:1349) to determine the depressive symptoms in widows within the first twelve months of bereavement, their findings were that, out of a sample of three hundred and fifty widows and widowers, thirty of them met the full DSM III - R criteria for depressive episode, immediately after the death of their spouses. The symptoms however, decreased with time to an extent that most of them were no longer depressed at the end of two months. The widows in this study showed that they were still depressed though most of them had completed two months of widowhood at the time of interviews. More striking was that the most psychologically distressed widow was in her twelfth month of mourning. This is contrary to what Zisook and Shuchter (1991:1349) reported that widows in their study showed decreased symptoms of depression after two months of mourning.

In addition to the psychological distress that they experienced, most widows mentioned specific symptoms such as feelings of sadness, sorrow, insomnia, guilt and others. Widows described these symptoms as follows:

"I become hopeless, I become depressed, not knowing what it is".

"At times I do cry bitterly, but crying alone ..."

"I really became weak ... I had a lot of dizziness".

These findings are similar to those of other researchers like Kalish (198:188), Parkes (1980:40) and Blyth (*in* Baumann, 1998:123) who found that widows mourning for the loss of their husbands experienced depressive symptoms; such as sadness, sorrow, insomnia, fatigue and guilt. Mendes de Leon *et al.* (1994:613) also found that conjugal bereavement contributed to about seventy five percent increase in depressive symptoms. They indicated however, that these symptoms should subside with the passage of time, reaching pre-widowhood levels by the end of twelve months. These are usually accompanied by the physical symptoms, which will be discussed next.

- **Physical symptoms experienced by the widow**

This additional category was identified because most widows reported physical symptoms that could be attributed to stress. Some statements quoted from transcriptions of interviews are as follows:

"I have had a pain in between the shoulders, very painful; but when that episode came, I would be short of breath, no longer feeling happy with the people".

"I have a pain from the back that radiates this way, to the chest", and

"I did feel physically exhausted; my body was really not well, I had to stay home for a few days".

The literature confirmation of the physical symptoms of widowhood is found in Parkes (*in* Schoeneberg, 1980:18) who stated that widows expressed bad physical health after the death of their husbands. This is supported by Lindemann (*in* Kalish, 1985:187) who stated the evidence of the following symptoms by widows:

Somatic distress, dry mouth, shortness of breath and empty feelings in the stomach.

Parkes (1986:40) also confirmed these findings, in the study that he conducted there was evidence that widows visited their doctors more often than they did before their husbands died.

Experience of loss of financial security

During the interviews with widows there was evidence that they experience loss of financial security due to the loss of their husbands. This further category will be discussed in the following two additional categories as stated in table 4.9:

- The widow fears future financial survival due to loss of breadwinner;
 - The widow fears for future education of children.
- **The widow fears future financial survival due to loss of breadwinner**

This additional category was identified because most widows who participated in this study expressed concern of experiencing financial strain after the death of their husbands. This concern was shared by seven widows irrespective of their age. This is with the exception of only one who said that she is financially secure, including with regard to the education of children. Older widows seemed to have been more worried about their future survival. The following examples quoted from the transcriptions of interviews indicate their concerns

“Even if he was no longer working his pension was worthwhile because we have to pay electricity and this and that”.

“Now after a husband had died, you were used to combining those ‘shillings’ the two of you, being able to make ends meet ...”

These findings are confirmed by Fulton and Bendiksen (1976:409) as well as Eells et al. (1995:270) whose studies found that a husband is not only a social partner but also, an economic partner so with his death the loss of financial or economic security is experienced. Lopata, complements these findings by adding that American women are still financially dependent on their husbands so when they die financial problems arise. These problems sometimes necessitate the threat of losing a house for a smaller one, thus leaving friends and neighbours behind. This is not the case in this study where rural families prefer to secure a permanent place of residence for life. In most cases these widows are married in community of property and this does not threaten the loss of a house as it is often paid off if it is a purchased house. The similarity is therefore

with regard to loss of economic support but not with the threat to loose a house.

- **The widow fears for future education of children**

This additional category was realised because younger widows in this study seemed to be more worried about the future education of their children. It was evident from what most widows expressed that education of children is a priority with regard to securing finance. Examples of this can be read in the following direct quotations from transcriptions of interviews:

“Now as I was thinking my problem is how am I going to manage because even those children, he was the one paying for their studies”.

“... you pay twelve thousand now for a child at tertiary, when this one goes to tertiary how much will we be paying?” (referring to her two year old daughter).

The financial insecurity that is experienced by widows especially with regard to the education of children seems to be similar to that explained by Fulton and Bendiksen (1976:409), Eells *et al.* (1998:270) and Lopata (1998:115), that a husband is not only a social partner but also an economic partner. Men are usually main breadwinners so their death leaves the widow with a problem of the maintenance of children, especially with regard to their education. This is not a unique finding.

4.3.1.5 Experience sense of over responsibility due to the absence of partner

This fifth major category of the widow's experience of sense of over responsibility due to the absence of partner was identified through independent coding by both the studyer and the co-coder. Only one sub category was identified under this major category, as indicated in Column E of table 4.1 namely:

- Experiences difficulty in managing the disruption in family life.
- **Experiences difficulty in managing the disruption in family life**

Table 4.10 below indicates further categories with regard to the widow's experience of

difficulty in managing the disruption in family life.

Table 4.10 Experiences difficulty in managing the disruption in family life

<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The widow lacks someone to share important family matters with.* The widow experiences difficulty in maintaining household property:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- problems related to routine maintenance and repairs of property;- problems related to the maintenance of livestock.

- **The widow lacks someone to share important family matters with**

This further category was identified because it was clear from the widows' concerns that the death of a husband causes disruption in family life. Widows expressed that many things were not normal and because in the Batswana culture the man is a dominant partner in marriage as it is usually said 'the head' of the family. This disruption was expressed as evident in the widows' lack of someone with whom to share family matters with. These were matters concerning the children such as their education, marriages as well as their discipline. Such matters were lead by the man so when he dies it becomes a burden on the widow. Examples of these were expressed as follows:

"To be a widow my child is painful, it is painful because you have been used to live with your partner, to an extent that everything, difficulties and nice things you shared them, being able to advise each other ..."

"I have boys so anybody can come claiming that your son had impregnated my child', so being a woman I don't know what I can say".

The literature does not seem to be clear about the over responsibility experienced by the widow. Holmes and Rahe (*in* Stroebe *et al.*, 1993:196) only mention that death of a spouse is rated most stressful and requires maximum readjustment in life. The situation that the widow finds herself in is inevitable and according to Pellman

situation that the widow finds herself in is inevitable and according to Pellman (1992:253), she has to experience role changes. Although the widows who participated acknowledged role changes, the aspect of their perceiving that they were burdened with over-responsibility is unique to this study.

* **The widow experiences difficulty in maintaining household property**

This further category regarding the difficulties that widows experience with the maintenance of household property will be discussed in two additional categories as indicated in table 4.10 namely:

- problems related to routine maintenance and repairs of property;
- problems related to the maintenance of livestock.

- **Problems related to routine maintenance and repairs of property**

This additional category with regard to the widow's experience of problems related to routine maintenance and repairs of property was identified through the widows' concern about this difficulty. Traditionally in the Batswana household the man is responsible for these duties such as fixing electrical appliances like kettles, irons, washing machines, replacing broken window panes, taking the car for repairs and service and others. If the man cannot do any of the repairs he is responsible for hiring an appropriate person to do it. The following are problems expressed quoted directly from transcriptions of interviews with widows:

"Ja, some of the frustrations really is that he was one man who used to do most of the things and I was sort of depending on him ... from here now everything is just on my shoulders".

"Even his hands because he was a handy person, he was doing almost everything for himself; you therefore keep on thinking if he was there, I could not be doing this".

The above quotations seem to confirm what De Garmo and Kitson (1996:994) found in their study, which compared the impact of spousal loss on widows and divorced women.

They found that widows evaluated their dead husbands positively as opposed to the divorced. They had positive memories which the researchers believe constitute a form of support which is reinforced by friends and family of the widow. This is similar to the findings that all widows who participated in this study said positive things about their late husbands and the extent to which they experience frustration because of their death. The frustration expressed was in terms of the household activities they are facing which their husbands used to do. This can be considered a major adjustment in lifestyle that is mentioned by McRahe and Costa (*in* Stroebe *et al.*, 1993:197). Another challenge that some widows faced over and above the maintenance of household property is that of looking after the livestock.

- **Problems related to the maintenance of livestock**

The widows who participated in this study also raised their problems with regard to the maintenance of livestock. According to the Batswana culture owning some livestock is a source of pride as this is viewed as traditional wealth. The man is usually the one responsible for looking after them except in cases of working men who could hire someone to look after them. When the man dies, women usually encounter problems because they do not know how to maintain these livestock. Some widows in this study mentioned that they had to sell these animals to solve the problem of maintenance. Another problem expressed was that relatives also demand a share, especially the in-laws. The following are examples of direct quotations of what they said with regard to this problem:

"I really don't feel good because there are so many things that he has been doing like he had a few sheep that he has been looking after; now I'm asking myself who will take care of them".

"The last born, a boy is presently at the farm looking after cattle".

"... they took care of everything, from the selling of cattle"; harvesting; they have done everything". (Referring to her brothers who helped her).

The seriousness of this issue can be realised here because two widows thought of

selling all the cattle while the other one had to let the youngest son leave school to look after cattle. This is a unique finding because the literature does not mention livestock and the problem it creates for the widow after the death of her husband.

The findings as well as the literature confirmation with regard to the widows' experience of widowhood and the mourning process have been discussed. Following is the discussion of the community's perceptions and beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process of the Batswana people.

4.3.2 THE DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF THE COMMUNITY'S BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS OF THE BATSWANA PEOPLE

Data analysis and coding of data on the community's perceptions and beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process culminated in the identification of four main categories. The main-, sub- and further categories as indicated in table 4.11 will be discussed and confirmed with literature. Examples of direct quotations from the transcriptions of interviews with community members will be given. Four major categories identified are as follows:

- * Perceptions about the effects of the mourning process.
- * Perceptions about the beliefs of the Batswana customs that the widow has to follow;
- * Perceptions of the need to support the widow;
- * Perceptions of the widow's mourning process as discrimination against women.

4.3.2.1 Perceptions about the effects of the mourning process

The main category of perceptions of the community with regard to the effects of the mourning process is divided into two subcategories as indicated in table 4.11 namely:

- Perceptions of acknowledging the emotional stress of the widow.

- Perceptions of the widow's role being confused due to customs that she is expected to follow during the mourning process.

- **Perceptions of acknowledging the emotional stress of the widow**

The Batswana community members interviewed for this study expressed having acknowledged that the widows seem to be emotionally stressed due to the death of their husbands.

TABLE 4.11 THE BATSWANA COMMUNITY'S PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

COLUMN A	COLUMN B	COLUMN C	COLUMN D
<p>PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF THE MOURNING PROCESS</p>	<p>PERCEPTIONS OF THE BELIEFS OF THE BATSWANA CUSTOMS THAT THE WIDOW HAS TO FOLLOW</p>	<p>PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEED TO SUPPORT THE WIDOW</p>	<p>PERCEPTIONS OF THE WIDOW'S MOURNING PROCESS AS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN</p>
<p>Perceptions of acknowledging the emotional stress of the widow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Perceptions of the widow's sense of loss of companion. * The widow goes through a grieving process. * Perceptions of the widow's loneliness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of emotional support. - Difficulty in accepting the death of her husband. * Perceptions of an impact of a missing male figure in the house. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of the need to maintain the name and dignity of the in-laws: * The widow has to respect herself, her family and society: * The widow has to follow the set rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She has to dress in her mourning clothes (black or navy blue). - Mourning clothes should be washed at night. - No intermingling with other people, e.g. at public gatherings. - Widow to be home at sunset. - When she visits specific places she has to go back straight home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of the widows' need to be assisted during her mourning process. * The emotional support provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The support provided by members of the family. - The support provided by the community members. * Spiritual support provided by the community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Church members visit frequently. - Traditional healer is appointed to 'cleanse' the entire household. * Social and material support offered by society: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighbours and friends assist with household chores. - Friends keep her company and involve her in a light-hearted conversation. - The widow needs assistance with regard to the discipline of children. - The widow needs advice with regard to the community's expectations of her role. * Financial support provided by the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of mourning restrictions being applicable to women only. * Mourning clothes are viewed as attaching the stigma to widows; * Widows are prevented from moving freely because of the beliefs. * Widows are prevented from engaging in relationships with men. * Widows are blamed for the death of their husbands. * Strict cultural rituals to be performed viewed as inflicting more pain to the widow. * Mourning rules are not strict on men.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of the widow's role being confused due to customs that she is expected to follow during the mourning process. * The widow is immediately relieved of her daily responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The widow is expected to stay in her bedroom to observe the mourning process. - She is not supposed to move around. * The widow is expected to perform certain rituals when visiting other households. * The widow has to assume both her own and her husband's responsibility at home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attending to all domestic chores. - Raising and maintaining the discipline of children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of the fear by the community that the widow may transfer the curse of death to them. * Community members believe that contact with the widow may be unsafe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crossing the widow's tracks is perceived as dangerous. - Sexual contact with the widow may cause disease ("boswagadi"). - Going into the cattle kraal and mielie fields constitute danger. • The belief that the end of mourning ceremony should take place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of Societal attitudes towards the widow: * Community members perceive their attitudes as positive. * Society is concerned that elderly people prescribed the customs without grounding. * Society believe that the widow has to follow the culture to remain with a clear conscience. 	
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Table 4.12 below indicates further and additional categories with regard to the community's perception of acknowledging the emotional stress of the widow.

Table 4.12 Perceptions of acknowledging the emotional stress of the widow

<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Perceptions of the widow's sense of loss of companion.* The widow goes through a grieving process.* Perceptions of the widow's loneliness:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack of emotional support.- Difficulty in accepting the death of her husband.* Perceptions of an impact of a missing male figure in the house.
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* **Perceptions of the widows' sense of loss of companion**

Community members interviewed for this study perceived the widow's loss resulting in her experience of emotional stress. In their description of widowhood and the mourning process community members seem to realise that the widow's emotional stress is due to loss of a companion. The following statements are quoted directly from the transcriptions of interviews:

"It is a period of loneliness as I observed those affected because one was used to living with the husband now when she is alone, it is really a lonely period".

"It is a person whose husband has died, and then at the time when her husband dies, she feels really lost ..."

The sense of loss of the widow is confirmed by Eells et al. (1995:270) that it is stressful because of the multiple roles that spouses play in each others' lives, that of being a confidante, sexual partner, economic partner, companion and fellow parent. The people who are living close to the widow, do realise all these roles, hence their perception of the widow's loss. Fulton and Bendiksen (1976:245) also confirmed in their study that culturally, death is a loss especially to close family members. This is therefore a finding which is common to other studies.

Community members also perceived that because of her loss, the widow also goes through the grieving process, hence the further category, which will be discussed next.

* **The widow goes through a grieving process**

Community members who participated in this study acknowledged that the widow is grieved. This could be detected in the participants descriptions of widowhood, which include their perception of the grief that the widow experiences. The following are direct quotations from transcriptions of interviews with community members, expressing their acknowledgement of the widow's grief:

"I can define the mourning process you know, as being withdrawn, feeling grief; you know grief in my own idea you know, you do not feel good, you feel bad, you feel depressed".

"Yes she was hopeless, even thinking that it would be better if she was also dead".

Literature confirmation of the widow's grief process is stated by Kleinke (1991:131) who described behaviours and experiences of people experiencing grief. These experiences such as depression, tension, hopelessness have been mentioned by community members. Other studies support the process of unresolved grief as described by Rando (in Kleinke, 1991:133). Gorer (in Parkes, 1986:178) has also confirmed these findings that, the Jewish allow their bereaved people a period of "sitting shiva" which allow mourners to internalise their grief and also, give others an opportunity to support them. Community members who participated in this study therefore acknowledge that the widow is undergoing a grief process and has to be supported, so this finding is not unique to this study.

* **Perceptions of the widow's loneliness**

The community members expressed a concern that they perceive the widow to be lonely because there is no more emotional support she used to be given by her husband. This further category of the community members' perception of the widow's loneliness is further divided into two additional categories as indicated in table 4.11. These are:

- Lack of emotional support.
- Difficulty in accepting the death of their husbands.

- Lack of emotional support

Community members interviewed for this study raised their concerns with regard to the loneliness of the widows due to lack of emotional support. They attribute this to the restrictions that the widow is subjected to such as being restricted from visiting other households or places where she can meet people. The following direct quotations from interviews indicate how community members perceive this lack of emotional support:

“... you don’t visit, it is the people who are supposed to visit you; and at times people don’t come as you expect them”.

“I mean if you are a widow, according to our culture, you are not supposed to mix with people, you are not supposed to go to social gatherings you see that is why I say you are taken away from other people”.

“... some people dislike widows so they won’t go closer to them ...”

Authors on bereavement such as Adolph (1996:25), Bankoff (1983:828), Farberow *et al.* (1992:121), Jacob (1996:284), Lopata (1988:126), and Van den Hoonaard (1994:122) all confirmed that the widows do not get emotional support from the people from whom they expect it. Winchell (*in* Johnson, 1997:6), Kaunonen, Tarkka, Paunonen and Laipalla (1999:1305) and Siegel and Kuykendall (1990:132), all acknowledge the importance of emotional support to the bereaved person. This shows that this finding is common to other studies.

- Difficulty in accepting the death of their husbands

This additional category was identified because most community members mentioned having observed that widows find it difficult to accept that their husbands are dead. They perceived widows to be talking much about their husbands, and often relating things as if they are referring to someone who is alive. The following quotations from interviews with community members confirm this perception:

“... she keeps on saying my husband used to say we must do this and that, so I can realise that this person it has not dawned, or it is still early, it is as if she has not accepted that this person is gone, he is no longer there”.

“It takes time for her to accept that it has happened; she remains helpless”.

These findings of the widow's difficulty to accept the death of their husbands have been confirmed by Shuchter and Zisook (*in* Stroebe *et al.* 1993:23) and Horowitz (*in* Eells *et al.* 1995:272) as one of the initial phases of mourning. This difficulty in accepting death is also explained by Farberow *et al.* (1992:121) as occurring during the first six months of loss of a close person. This is further described as a phase of mourning at which the full impact of loss has sunk and grief is fully realised. This finding is similar to this study because even community members observed widows to be in severe grief to an extent of finding it difficult to accept the loss. The same authors as above stated that grief has to be resolved successfully for the individual to readjust to the environment in which the dead person is missing.

*** Perceptions of an impact of a missing male figure in the house**

This further category was realised because community members perceived that the widow's role is now two-fold. Firstly, she has to continue with her role which is disturbed by her grief; secondly, she has to assume the paternal role which the community members observed she was not coping with. It was explained that the impact is even worse in cases where the late husband was perceived to be hardworking and responsible in the family. This can be deduced in the following statements quoted directly from the transcriptions of interviews:

“Her husband as I used to observe them together, he was a person who used to do many things for her, like if the husband can do groceries, paying this and that, such things. Now what I have noticed is that those things are facing her”.

“Like she was saying that he used to help her with the child, they had no baby-sitter so he used to look after the child”.

In confirming these findings from literature, Parkes and Weiss (1983:1) agree that grief

is such a painful condition that it interferes with the affected person's effective functioning in everyday activities. Parkes (in Stroebe et al. 1993:95) also confirms that when a person is grieved she becomes so lost in her own grief that she becomes disorganised; in her disorganization it becomes difficult to step aside from the disorganization to clearly view in perspective what is really lost and what remains. These findings is therefore common to other studies.

- **Perceptions of the widow's role being confused due to customs that she is expected to follow during the mourning process**

The Batswana community members generally acknowledged that the customs expected of the widow to follow during mourning are confusing. Table 4.13 below indicates further categories as well as additional categories with regard to the community members' perceptions of the widow's role being confused due to customs that she is expected to follow during mourning.

Table 4.13 Perceptions of the widow's role being confused due to customs that she is expected to follow during the mourning process

<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The widow is immediately relieved of her daily responsibilities:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The widow is expected to stay in her bedroom to observe the mourning process.- she is not supposed to move around.* The widow is expected to perform certain rituals when visiting other households.* The widow has to assume a dual responsibility at home:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Attending to all domestic chores.- Raising and maintaining the discipline of children.

- * **The widow is immediately relieved of her daily responsibilities**

It is the custom of the Batswana people that when a woman loses a husband, all activities are suspended especially during the initial period of mourning. This further

category concerning the widow being laid off from her daily responsibilities will be divided into two additional categories as indicated in table 4.12 namely:

- The widow is expected to stay in her bedroom to observe the mourning process.
 - The widow is not supposed to move around.
- **The widow is expected to stay in her bedroom to observe the mourning process**

During data analysis of this study, both the researcher and the co-coder identified that the widow is subjected to certain restrictions. Immediately the husband's death is realised the widow is laid off from all the daily responsibilities. These include all household work such as cooking, washing and cleaning, including going to work if she is working. She has to take leave from work and remain confined to her bedroom as part of the mourning process and she is given an opportunity to internalise her grief. Community members are also given an opportunity to visit her as part of the support they have to give her and she must be found at home. Community members interviewed did not necessarily mention this in their responses but it was implied because they perceived it as an obvious practice not deserving to be mentioned.

The following direct quotations from transcriptions of interviews are examples of this situations:

"... she becomes frustrated, that is why she has to stay at home; she might have some people, relatives who are supporting her especially at the early stage of widowhood".

"You know she's cut from many responsibilities as a widow"

"... she would stop getting to the fields to go and do her field chores there ...".

Kastenbaum (1977:263) wrote that cultures differ with regard to specific signs of mourning but it seems universal for the bereaved person to display a particular behaviour that acknowledges the reaction to death. In this study, the Batswana widows

are strictly excluded from public life, meaning that they cannot engage in their usual daily activities because they are mourning. This was also confirmed by Pauw (1990:76). This finding is however, not unique to this study because Van den Hoonaard (1990:124) in her study also discovered that the Jewish people allow their bereaved spouses to observe a time of inactivity. This is usually the first week of bereavement.

- **The widow is not supposed to move around**

Over and above having to stay home when she is bereaved, the widow is also restricted from moving around. She is not supposed to visit her neighbours, or any other place.

According to the Batswana belief, a widow is infested with “bad luck”, hence she has that potential danger of spreading the “bad luck” as she moves around. Some community members interviewed for this study actually felt strongly about this concern.

They criticized young widows for being dangerous because they do not observe their mourning process. Some were said to be hiding behind their churches which are against the Batswana culture, hence jeopardising the beliefs of the Batswana in this regard. The following statements quoted from the transcriptions of interviews indicate some of their dissatisfactions:

“It is because young widows do not mourn, and again do not follow restrictions and rules as set ... that is why the young widows are dangerous” .

“The community is still complaining ... that those churches are bringing ee’ some changes in their community”.

“They never move around, and she must not be out of her yard by sunset” “and again she’s not allowed to move around in the village ...”.

According to Kastenbaum (1977:248), Pauw (1990:80) and Van den Hoonaard (1990:124) different cultures have their customs of expressing their mourning, and a period of confinement seems to be common though it may differ from culture to culture.

An example is that of the Jewish period of ‘sitting Shiva’ which is seven days (van den Hoonaard, 1990:124), when the Batswana require a widow to stay home for a period ranging from two weeks for those who are working, up to six months for those who are not working. With regard to the young widows being against the culture, this findings

are also confirmed by Glick (in Kastenbaum, 1977:247) who observed in his study that other widows abandon their cultural practices, giving different reasons for doing so. An example is that of conflicting church beliefs, about which some widows give excuses for not following culture. This finding is confirmed by other studies, and therefore common to other cultures.

* **The widow is expected to perform certain rituals when visiting other households**

This further category was realised because community members who participated in this study mentioned that initially the widow is confined to her home as discussed above. After a certain period ranging from two weeks to three months she may be allowed to visit the neighbours and close relatives only. There are certain rituals that she has to perform to be admitted to each household. On her first visit she has to wait at the gate and announce her presence by any means possible. One of the members of that household then comes with a piece of charcoal which is given to the widow to throw into the yard or house. She can then go in or alternatively, she is given a herbal mixture to sprinkle at the gate of her home before she leaves. It is believed to neutralise her danger to infect other households. After these rituals are performed, they are not repeated and thereafter she can then visit freely. The following are the statements quoted directly from the transcriptions of interviews with community members:

"... you must first take a burnt piece of charcoal and throw it over so that you can be able to enter".

"Yes, like mixing water with a certain herb, that is now after three months before she goes out she spills it at the gate".

This custom seems to affect only the Batswana and some African cultures as confirmed by Pauw (1990:70) because his study was conducted among the Africans. He found that after the widow's prohibition from leaving her home is lifted, she has to be ceremonially admitted to the households that she wishes to visit. The same ritual as explained under this further category is followed, except that in Pauw's (1990:80) study, grains of sorghum or maize are used instead of charcoal. This seems to be unique for

black South Africans.

* **The widow has to assume both her own and her husband's responsibilities at home**

There was a general concern among the community members that after the death of her husband, the widow is faced with all the responsibilities at home.

This further category with regard to the widow having to assume her own and her husband's responsibilities at home is divided into two additional categories namely:

- Attending to all domestic chores
- Raising and maintaining the discipline of children

- **Attending to all domestic chores**

Community members interviewed expressed concern with regard to the widow's increased responsibility. They acknowledged that the widows have been sharing the responsibilities with their husband so after their death they suffer the dual responsibility of their role and the husband's role. The following statements are quoted directly from the transcriptions of interviews as follows:

"... but then she is left with many problems, some of which are not hers but her husband's; some are directly hers though even if you are a woman facing a problem, you need a male person to help you solve them".

"Well, the role that she plays is that now all the responsibility is hers".

This aspect of the findings is confirmed by Pellman (1992:253), who stated that after the death of a husband, the wife experiences role changes. Holmes and Rahe (in Stroebe et al. 1993:196) concur that death of spouse requires maximum readjustment in life. In this study the community members perceived that the widow has to attend to all the household tasks, even those that were done by her husband. This is a major readjustment in life, and therefore this finding is common to other studies done.

- **Bringing up and maintaining the discipline of children**

This additional category was realised because it came out strongly as an area of concern from the community members who participated in this study. The main concern was that this task of raising and disciplining children becomes difficult for the widow after the death of a husband. Participants acknowledged that children tend to listen better to their fathers. The following statements quoted directly from transcriptions indicate what community members' perceptions are with regard to this matter:

"Yes widowhood has a lot of problems because if you are a widow, because boys are the father's children whom when they hear his voice they respond; now as a mother when you talk it is as if they don't hear you"

"She has a daughter who is a delinquent who just roams about so she would say of this child, I am worried about her and if my husband was alive she was better but now she just wants to be loose".

The problem of disciplining children after the death of the father seems not to be a unique finding of this study because Fulton and Bendiksen (1976:408) also stated that after the death of a spouse the family has to consider new ways of family operations. New ways of operations in this study may mean that the mother has to take full responsibility of providing for the day to day needs of children including their discipline. This finding justifies the stressful situation that the community members observed the widows face with regard to attending to household chores as well as the raising and disciplining of children.

4.3.2.2 Perceptions of the beliefs of the Batswana customs that the widow has to follow

Column B of table 4.11 indicates the second main category regarding the community's perceptions of the beliefs of the Batswana customs that the widow has to follow. This major category is divided into two sub categories namely:

Perception of:

- * The need to maintain the name and dignity of the in-laws
- * the fear of the community that the widow may transfer the curse of death to them.
- * **Perceptions of the need to maintain the name and dignity of the in-laws**
- * Table 4.14 below indicate further categories under the subcategory of the perception of the need to maintain the name and dignity of the in-laws.

Table 4.14 Perceptions of the need to maintain the name and dignity of the in-laws

- * **The widow has to respect herself, her family and society.**
- * **The widow has to follow the set rules:**
 - she has to dress in her mourning clothes (black or navy blue).
 - mourning clothes should be washed at night.
 - no intermingling with other people, e.g. at public gatherings.
 - widow to be home at sunset.
 - when she visits specific places she has to come back straight home.

- * **The widow has to respect herself, her family and society**

This further category was realised because the community members interviewed for this study mentioned that it is important for the widow to respect herself, her family and the society. This respect should be observed in her behaviour which should be seen to be respectful of her late husband. This should be done by her avoidance of relationships especially with men, during her mourning process. The following statements quoted directly from the transcriptions of interviews show the community's concerns:

"She must respect people, stay still at home and not move around; yes, not only

people, she also respects herself and her family”.

“It is just like I say that she is supposed to behave well”.

As far as mourning is concerned especially with regard to behaviour it is the view of Fulton and Bendiksen (1976:244) that emotional displays of bereaved persons may be learned responses with nothing to do with an individual's feelings of grief. They also stated that every behaviour that the bereaved person manifests with is regarded as grief. Kastenbaum (1977:244) views that society has expectations that a grieved person will mourn. It is thus possible for a bereaved person not to experience grief, but engage in cultural expressions of mourning. These views support the findings of this study because mourning seems to be externalised in the Batswana context. The society appears to be satisfied with what the widow does as expected culturally, rather than what she feels internally. It is for this reason that the widow who does not “show” grief, is criticised for not “respecting herself, her family and society. These findings are unique because the widow in the Batswana context is compelled to behave according to the cultural prescriptions and not according to her feelings. The widow's behaviour indicating respect is also judged by her compliance with the set rules.

*** The widow has to follow the set rules**

The Batswana community members who participated in this study expressed a serious concern that the widow should follow the mourning rules as set by the elderly people.

This further category is divided into five additional categories as indicated in table 4.14 namely:

- The widow has to dress in her mourning clothes (black or navy blue).
- mourning clothes should be washed at night.
- no intermingling with other people, e.g. at public gatherings.
- widow to be home at sunset.
- when the widow visits specific places she has to go back straight home.

- **The widow has to dress in her mourning clothes (black or navy blue)**

Community members interviewed perceive the mourning attire as serious. They therefore thought it is important that the widow should dress in her mourning attire so that she is easily identified. This will assist community members to take precautions against her, such as avoiding contact because they believe that she is harmful. However, there are those who think this attire is unnecessary because it is meant to stigmatise the widow. The following statements are explanatory of how community members differ about the mourning attire, quoted directly from transcriptions:

"... in my Tswana culture the widow has to wear black clothing, ... for a year at most".

"To me this attire seems to be aggravating the problems because you are now conspicuous, everybody sees you wherever you are".

"I really don't like the black attire that they are putting on"

"It is because we young widows do not mourn; and again we do not follow the rules as they are set for us, like putting on the black attire; that is why the young widows are dangerous"

"It is like that mama, there are widows who do not put on mourning clothes and that lack of mourning kill them ..."

Community members who are opposed to the black attire indicate that this attire is not comfortable and hence not easily accepted by every widow. This is supported by Parkes (1986:179) who stated that the Victorian era widows used to wear a black dress. To show that they were uncomfortable with it they later on replaced it with a dark dress and an armband. Parkes also stated that widows in the western culture used to be identified by mourning tokens though some have done away with them. Feinsstein and Mayo (1990:128) also stated that in the Orthodox Jewish black is worn as a sign of mourning. The rejection of black clothes by the widows as seen under the findings of their experience as well as some of the community members negative views may be due to the restrictions going with the wearing of this attire, as discussed in this chapter.

- **The mourning clothes should be washed at night**

The community members' perceptions in this regard are that the widows' mourning clothes are supposed to be washed at night because of the belief that the community has to be protected from the "bad omen" associated with death. Some of the community members who were interviewed just stated that mourning clothes are washed and dried only at night and they did not know the reason. The following are some statements quoted directly from interviews:

"... she told me that she is supposed to wash them during the night".

"... she washes them at night when people do not see her, in the morning she puts them on".

"Same pair same dress, if it is a skirt and a blouse she wears it day and night, I mean she washes it at night".

This practice which seems to be applicable to the Batswana was confirmed by Pauw (1990:79), who found in his study that mourning clothes in Black culture are referred to as clothes of 'darkness' ("sefifi"). Hanging them on the washing line during the day is believed to be dangerous as it poses a threat of infecting other people with the "bad luck". The community members' perceptions on this aspect are that if the widow chooses to dress in the mourning clothes she has to wash them at night, so that she may not affect them by transferring her bad luck to them.

- **No intermingling with other people**

As it was expressed by the widows themselves, community members also stated that the widow is not permitted to intermingle with society. It is for this reason that she is prevented from attending social gatherings like meetings, parties, funerals and church services. According to members interviewed, the period of restriction depends on individual families. It ranges from three months up to a year. This restriction was also explained by the community members as being due to the belief that the widow carries "bad luck" so she may affect other people when she attends public gatherings. They added that the black attire itself is to reinforce these rules so that she feels

uncomfortable to be among the people. The following are community members' statements quoted directly from the interviews:

"You are not supposed to mix with people, you are not supposed to go to social gatherings".

"I mean loneliness in the sense that the widow in our black culture is not supposed to mix with other people during that period".

"So her role in the community is so diminished ... she will never just go to any é é ... feast or any gatherings, meetings ... so for that whole year, she is not expected to go anywhere".

The support from literature indicated that other cultures such as the Agutainos of Polawan, the widow is treated as being 'unclean' as stated by Kalish (1985:209). Van den Hoonaard (1997:541) also confirmed in his study that widows are usually even rejected by even their friends because they believe that they are somehow unfortunate to have lost their husbands. They do not feel comfortable therefore, to intermingle with society. Stroebe et al. (1993:108) however presented a positive view that the community at times isolate the bereaved family because they fear saying or doing wrong things, not because they dislike them. The prevention of the widow from attending social gatherings may also be a measure of ensuring that she is always home especially at sunset. This is therefore a unique findings to this study, because in others cultures she is not restricted as such but the widow chooses not to intermingle because she feels rejected..

- **The widow must be home at sunset**

One of the most important rules emphasized by the community members is that of being at home to set a candle alight for the late husband's clothes at sunset. The candle light is said to be a symbol of respect for his soul because it is believed that it has not completely departed because the clothes are still in the house. At the end of the mourning process, the clothes are given away to relatives. Community members said the following statement with regard to being home after sunset:

"They never move around, and she must not be out of her yard after sunset".

"Yes that is why I said the role of the widow is that ... before sunset the light must be on, particularly for the clothes of the late husband, it is a culture thing, that one is known".

This is a unique finding because it was not found in the literature.

- **When she visits specific places she has to go straight home**

Community members voiced their concerns with regard to widows who do not comply with the rules, especially moving around. This rule of going to a specific place and straight home seems to enhance the restriction of not moving around. The reason behind this is because it is believed that the widow is dangerous, so moving around poses a threat of affecting animals and small children. Another reason stated was that when the widow has to move away from home certain rituals are carried out to prevent her from endangering the community. Amongst other things she has to sprinkle a mixture at the crossroads when she passes for the first time. She therefore has to use the same route when she leaves home and returns following the same route. Using other routes is believed to be dangerous to the community. The following are statements of what the community members said with regard to these routes:

"If she is allowed to go to town, she should go straight to town and come back home",

"... if there is something that she needs from somewhere she should rather send a child".

"According to Batswana culture they say when this widow is moving around she is going to pass the places where the cattle will be passing, when the cattle come where she passed they are going to die".

These findings were not confirmed by literature except that Feinstein and Mayo (1990:128) stated that Orthodox Jews used to allow the widow seven days of inactivity for grieving. However, this period has nothing attached to it except that she is allowed

to grieve. On the contrary, this study found that the widow can even be reported to the chief if she fails to honour the period of mourning, especially moving around which is considered sensitive due to the belief that she will endanger other people, especially children and animals. This seems to be common among South African blacks as found by Pauw (1990:81), who also stated that when the widow is supposed to go somewhere, she has to use the same route to avoid contaminating other routes in the village.

- **Perception of the fear by the community that the widow may transfer the curse of death to them**

Table 4.15 below indicates further and additional categories with regard to the fear of community members with regard to the risk of being infected with “bad luck” from the widow.

Table 4.15 Perception of the fear by the community that the widow may transfer the curse of death to them

<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Community members believe that contact with the widow may be unsafe:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Crossing the widow’s tracks is perceived as dangerous.- Sexual contact with the widow may cause disease (“boswagadi”).- Going into the cattle kraal and mielie fields constitute danger.* The belief that the end of mourning ceremony should take place.
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- * **Community members believe that contact with the widow may be unsafe**

Community members interviewed for this study stated that the Batswana people’s belief that the widow has bad luck contributes to avoidance of contact with her.

This further category will be discussed according to the three additional categories as they appear in table 4.15 above.

- **Crossing the widow's tracks is perceived as dangerous**

Community members who participated in this study mostly explained the danger associated with any contact with the widow. It has been previously discussed that the widow is not supposed to move around. The belief linked to her movements is that because she carries "bad luck" her tracks are dangerous because if the mother carrying a small baby crosses those tracks it may fall sick, and if prompt treatment is not given the baby may die. The same danger is also attached to pregnant women. The following quotations are statements as made by community members.

"I usually hear old people saying that the widow who moves around is the one who makes the small babies sick, because of her 'hot blood'".

"She must not omit any rule because tomorrow when something has happened like being warned of carrying anybody's baby because you are heated up".

Pauw (1990:79) confirmed through his study which found that the widow should avoid going to a house with a newborn baby, as well as the room of a sick person because her presence may aggravate the condition. It is not only the widow's presence and her tracks that affect others, but sexual contact seems to be more dangerous, as discussed next.

- **Sexual contact with the widow may cause disease ("boswagadi")**

This was identified as an area of major concern to community members. They expressed their belief of the seriousness of the consequences of widows who have sexual contact with men during the mourning process. Some community members believe that some widows do it deliberately to kill these men. Anger was displayed by some community members especially when they made mention of those widows who do not put on the mourning clothes to be identified. They thought that it is done deliberately to kill men. The following examples are quoted directly from the interviews:

"So people will start complaining that this woman must be disciplined because if many men can go to her that is going to spread";

"it is like that mama, ... and that lack of mourning kill men ..."

"You will find that this AIDS originates from there ..."

Studies conducted in Western communities do not mention anything about sexual contact with the widow. Pauw (1990:80) confirms that his study found that after the death of a husband, the widow should undergo a ritual that renders sex a taboo for her during the mourning process. Her body is tapped with the treated hoof of a beast that was slaughtered for her husband's funeral. She then becomes dangerous to any man who have sexual contact with her. This man will develop swelling of feet or/and body ('boswagadi') with ultimate death if not effectively treated. This is also a finding that seems to be common with South African blacks.

- **Going into the cattle kraal and mielie fields constitute danger**

This is another area of concern for the community members with regard to the mourning process of the widow. Some of them believe but some do not believe that if the widow passes in the 'mielie' fields or the cattle kraal the crops and cattle can be endangered. Interesting to the researcher was that even those who said that they don't believe felt that the widow should not go to the 'mielie' fields and cattle kraal. The following are statements that reflect their views:

"She is not supposed to pass the cattle especially in the villages" and

"someone told me even the fields, she is not supposed to pass through the fields because they take it that bad luck ('sefifi') which she has may kill the crops"

This danger has been confirmed by Pauw (1990:80) who in his study, found that it is believed that if the widow goes to the fields without taking necessary precautions, crops may not ripen. He also mentioned what was stated by one community member in this study, that rainfall may also be adversely affected if widows do not follow these rules. Some community members could not understand why widows do not follow the rules because they are only temporary for the mourning period, and not permanent. This is also a finding unique to the black South Africans.

* **The belief that the end of mourning ceremony should take place**

Community members who participated in this study acknowledged that there has to be a ceremony marking the end of mourning. This is usually the responsibility of the widow's family of origin. There are rituals that are undertaken to free the widow from the restrictions she experienced for a year. Firstly the widow should be accompanied by some of her in-laws to her home where the ceremony should take place. Secondly, a cow has to be slaughtered for the occasion because some of the rites to be performed, which are often led by an uncle, need some parts of this animal. Where a cow is not available, community members said that a sheep is also acceptable.

Thirdly, the widow should be washed with water treated with herbs and intestinal contents of the slaughtered animal. This was expressed by community members as being important because it is a final measure to get rid of the "bad luck" ("sefffi"). The rite should be performed early in the morning before sunrise. The uncle pours the water into the bath, together with herbs and intestinal contents of the animal. The widow is then bathed by the same uncle or his wife if present. Lastly, she is given new clothes to put on and her mourning clothes are burnt. Statements expressing these rites are quoted as follows:

"After one year is then that she will go to her home and be taken out of that attire, and then she can be freed".

"Some slaughter a cow, some a sheep, it depends on what they can afford".

"... then they take the guts and that intestinal contents, I don't know what they put in the water, then the uncle is to come and wash her from head to toe".

These findings are only confirmed by Pauw (1990:81) who mentioned that the mourning process of the widow as well as those taboos that go with it are terminated after a year. His findings differ from this study because community members in this study did not mention that the widow's hair as well as her children's is shaved for the first time since the death of the husband/father. Other findings of Pauw's study are similar to this study in respect of the end of mourning ceremony. This ceremony seems to be unique to

African culture because the literature of Western culture study does not mention it.

4.3.2.3 Perceptions of the need to support the widow

Column C of table 4.2 indicates the main category of the community members' perceptions with regard to the need to support the widow during her widowhood and the mourning process.

- **Perceptions of the widow's need to be assisted during her mourning process**

Community members acknowledged that the widow needed to be supported during her mourning process, because of her loss of emotional, financial and social support. Table 4.16 below indicates further and additional categories under the subcategory of the community's perception of the widows' need to be assisted during her mourning process.

Table 4.16 Perceptions of the widow's need to be assisted during her mourning process.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The emotional support provided:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The support provided by members of the family.- The support provided by community members.* Spiritual support provided by the community:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Church members visit frequently.- Traditional healer is appointed to 'cleanse' the entire household.* Social and material support offered by society:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Neighbours and friends assist with household chores.- Friends keep her company and involve her in light-hearted conversation.- The widow needs assistance with regard to the discipline of children.- The widow needs advice with regard to the community's expectation of her role.* Financial support provided by the community.
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* **The emotional support provided**

This further category with regard to the emotional support provided by the widow's support systems is divided into two additional categories according to the community members' responses, namely:

- The support provided by members of the family.
- The support provided by community members.

- **The support provided by members of the family**

Community members interviewed acknowledged that the widow does get emotional support from the members of the family. As soon as the death is announced relatives usually go to the bereaved family to sympathise. Elderly relatives bring their bedding because they stay with the widow, day and night. This continues until after the funeral when a few of them (the closest) would remain for a month or two, until they are satisfied that she has adapted to the situation. The following are statements given by community members in their responses to the question of what support they give to the widow:

"About relatives what I know is that at the time of death they stayed at her place".

"So normally there will be those people even if they are close relatives or not close relatives, just the neighbours, they will be coming to sleep with this widow at her place ..."

Schulz (1978:159) mentioned that in the USA a widow-to-widow programme was started, and this confirmed the findings of this study as it has subsequently been explained. Widows who had lost their husbands some time before visit newly bereaved widows living in their area according to Schulz (1978:159). They provide the emotional support, practical help as well as advice and they do not pretend to be professionals. One of the criteria used for selection is that they should have grieved effectively. They therefore support a new widow using their previous experience. This finding is similar to the finding of this study because the Batswana people also prefer older widows to be

closest to the new widow, hence the cooking, serving and other forms of assistance must be done by them. The difference is that with Schulz's study, there is no mention of older widows actually staying and sleeping with the new widow.

O'Bryant (1985:305) also confirmed that when an elderly person loses a spouse, she relies on close relatives, neighbours and close friends for support. Bankoff (1983:831) however, stated that the bereaved may not appreciate the emotional support at the critical stage because the pain of death is still intense. According to the community members interviewed for this study, it is at the very critical stage that the emotional support is necessary. This perception therefore differs from the findings in Bankoff's (1983:831) study.

- **The support provided by the community members**

It is considered as a norm in the Batswana culture that when there is death in a family, members of society frequently pay visits to offer both emotional and material support. Participants of this study said that they provided it because they found it helpful. The following are direct quotations from interviews with community members:

"Firstly as a community we were shocked by the death, and we stood by her side and supported her and so on".

"At the early stage of her widowhood they normally come and visit her, to come and really give her moral support ...".

Authors on the support of widows such as Lopata (1983:126), van den Hoonaard (1997:541) and Kaunonen et al. (1999:1305) all found in their studies that widows did not get sufficient support from their friends. Reeves et al. (1973:95) and Glick (in Schulz 1978:157) agreed that support is needed when a person is bereaved. This view is supported by community members in this study. These participants also added that they gave emotional support to the widows and that they never left them alone during the time of bereavement. This is therefore a finding, common in both Western and African cultures.

* **Spiritual support provided by the community**

Spiritual support of the widow was frequently mentioned by community members in this study. This will be discussed in two additional categories namely:

- church members visit frequently; and
- traditional healer is appointed to 'cleanse' the entire household.

- **Church members visit frequently**

This additional category was identified because though most community members did not mention the support that the church give to the widow, it is a tradition. As soon as death is announced, prayers are held regularly at the deceased's home to offer spiritual support to the family. This continues until the burial. Thereafter, if the widow belongs to some church groups, the particular groups will occasionally visit her. Community members did not mention the church support, apparently because they thought it was obvious and therefore that there is no need to mention it. Some of the statements mentioned were the following:

"Eh, for example from the religious aspect you know, they usually went to her to give prayers ..."

"... at times we talk about scriptures from the Bible to prevent boredom and I often see her enjoying those scriptures".

This is not a unique finding for this study because Siegel and Kuykendall (1990:156) in their study on the support of widows, found that those widows who were members of a church experienced less impact of loss. Schulz (1978:157) also viewed the spiritual support of the clergy as necessary in cases where the widow needed professional support.

- **Traditional healer is appointed to 'cleanse' the entire household**

This aspect of the findings was emphasised by almost all the community members who participated in this study, apparently because it is viewed as important. They explained

that after the death of a man the uncle must consult or appoint a traditional healer to cleanse the entire household. It is believed that death brings “bad luck” so all members of the family should undergo a “washing” ritual. The traditional healer either does it himself or gives instructions to the uncle to do it.

The widow in particular, undergoes an intensive treatment which includes washing and taking herbal mixtures for a certain period of time. The treatment is believed to expel “bad luck” so that as she goes to certain places (where she is allowed) such as work or town, she should not spread the “bad luck”. Herbal mixtures are also believed to ‘cleanse’ her system so that at the end of mourning when she gets involved with a man, she may not endanger him with “boswagadi”. Community members supported this as part of culture and that the widow should follow it to avoid being accused of spreading negative events. This is considered part of the spiritual support to the widow because she also feels safe after undergoing these rituals. Statements of the community members’ responses with regard to this are as follows:

“What I have observed from the widows, it is said that you must drink medicines. You have a special traditional healer who prepares them”.

“They give her some herbs, they give her a certain mixture of herb, and then some of it is given to her to swallow, ... and some of it is mixed with water but she’s going to wash from head to toe”.

“The uncle will come and make that ‘mogaga’ (a traditional medicine) and wash you ...”.

This culture of washing rituals is unique as found in this study, except that Pauw (1990:79) mentioned that in his study which was also conducted among the Botswana and Basotho, there is washing of hands and sprinkling of the feet and the grave after the funeral, as part of neutralising the ‘ritual danger’ of the widow. This also seems to be an African belief, that reassures the widow of her safety.

* **Social and material support offered by society**

This further is divided into four additional categories as indicated in table 4.16. These

are as follows, according to community members' responses:

- Neighbours and friends assist with household chores.
 - Friends keep her company and involve her in a light-hearted conversation.
 - The widow needs assistance with regard to the discipline of children.
 - The widow needs advice with regard to the community's expectations of her role.
- **Neighbours and friends assist with household chores**

Community members who participated in this study acknowledged the need for social and material support from the widows' neighbours and friends. When death has struck in a family, traditionally people go to comfort the bereaved in turns, and this happens throughout the time of death, until after the burial. There are also relatives who stay with the widow for the time of bereavement. Community members stated that they bring along their cooking utensils such as large saucepans, extra plates, cups and cutlery. They use them to assist in cooking for the people and serving them. The bereaved family do not cook for themselves because there are usually more people around. This support was expressed as follows:

"The community will come in numbers to come and help; then let's say during the funeral; and then after the funeral they will still come to do many other things".

"Let's say the husband left something that he was doing before his death, or maybe he was fencing the yard. The community will come and finish up that fence free".

"We used to work together in the house putting away things as they were before".

With regard to literature confirmation of this aspect Lopata (1988:116), O'Bryant (1985:305), Reeves et al. (1973:95) and Schoenberg (1980:246) stated that friends and neighbours are the best people to provide social support to the widow during mourning and afterwards. This is therefore a common finding as confirmed by the

abovementioned authors and this study, because friends and neighbours admitted to having helped the widow, during the mourning period.

- **Friends keep her company and involve her in a light-hearted conversation**

Most community members interviewed for this study mentioned that it was necessary to keep the widow company. They said that they visited as friends and neighbours and involved her in a light-hearted conversation to help her forget about her late husband, thus adjusting to the loss. Direct quotations of statements of what they said are as follows:

"I think that they should visit her to keep her company so that she does not feel the loneliness ... it helps her because later you'll observe her being happy, making jokes and enjoying it".

"Support her in the way of visiting her, talking to her about pleasant things that won't cause her stress ..."

"... so to take that person out of that thing you must always go to her you know, talk about something you know, which will bring light for that person".

Lopata (1983:126), Adolph (1996:20), Bankoff (1996:989), Farberow et al. (1992:120), Gorer (in Schulz, 1978:156), Glick (in Schulz, 1978:157) and Kaunonen et al. (1999:1307) all support the importance of involvement with close people to assist the widow overcome her grief. This literature supports the findings of this study as perceived by community members.

- **The widow needs assistance with regard to the discipline of children**

Responding to the question of what help they think the widow needs during her widowhood and the mourning process, community members seemed mostly concerned about the discipline of children. They said that children become a problem to the widow since she cannot discipline them as effectively as they did with her husband.

Some of these concerns were expressed as follows:

“... they can help her with children; at times this mourning is aggravated by children; you find that children do not listen to you”;

“... they normally encounter the problem with children, so with that one the headmen, councillors should really support this widow”.

The only support mentioned in literature is by Lopata (1988:116) who referred to caring for small children. Nothing was found with regard to the discipline of children, so the finding seems unique to this study.

- **The widow needs advice with regard to the community’s expectations of her role**

In addition to other types of help that the community perceives as necessary to the widow, the above mentioned additional category was mentioned. The community members pointed out that some widows are genuinely ignorant of their role during the mourning process, especially in terms of the rules. They therefore think that she should be advised on what to do to avoid being blamed or accused. The following are some of the statements of advice they thought she would need as quoted from transcriptions of interviews:

“... She needs parents who can help her with advices that my child, when it is like this if you can follow this way, you will see things working better for you”.

“I think she needs help of being kept company, be made aware of what she must do to respect widowhood”.

The community members’ perceptions with regard to the advice to the widow differed from what Schulz (1978:139) and Jacob (1996:286) found. The advice that they found the widows would require would be with regard to legal matters. Community members in this study did not mention anything about legal advice and this shows that this finding is unique.

* **Financial support provided by the community**

It is a tradition in black culture that when there is death, condolences are offered by the members of the community in different forms. Such plans are usually organized by certain groups in society, in anticipation of death. Community members interviewed acknowledged these forms of support that the widow get from the people. These are in the form of money, groceries, vegetables, meat and other accessories that are used for catering during the time of death, for example cooking and serving utensils. Direct quotations from interviewees confirm these forms of support:

"... with anything that they can help you with opinions, financially if they are able, with hands if they can, even prayers if possible".

"They will come to her, ask her what she wants and then they can bring that".

Financial and practical support of the widow, especially during the critical stage of mourning as viewed by community members in this study, is supported by literature. Jacob (1996:284) stated that communities need to provide various services for widows. He mentioned, similar to this study, support groups that provide social support, spiritual and practical support. The practical support that Jacob (1996:286) mentioned included transportation, financial management, legal assistance, tasks of daily living and household chores. Financial support of the widow is therefore a common finding supported by other studies.

The perceptions of community members with regard to the help and support needed by the widow during her mourning process have been discussed. The next sub-category to be discussed is the community's perceptions of their attitudes towards the widow.

* **Perceptions of societal attitudes towards the widow**

To confirm the community's support of the widow, the participants were also asked about their attitudes towards her, which they perceived as positive. Table 4.17 below indicates further categories of the community members' perceptions with regard to societal attitudes towards the widow.

Table 4.17 Perceptions of societal attitudes towards the widow

- * **Community members perceive their attitudes as positive.**
- * **Some members of society are concerned that elderly people prescribed customs without grounding.**
Some members of society believe that the widow has to follow the culture to remain with a clear conscience.

* **Community members perceive their attitude as positive**

All the community members interviewed for this study responded positively to the question of what their attitude is towards the widow. This is despite the fact that about two community members' responses showed negativity towards widows, in general. These answers could have been influenced by the fact that community members interviewed were either friends, neighbours or relatives who were close to the widow concerned. The following are some statements of the responses quoted directly from transcriptions of interviews:

"My attitude is positive, to help her get out of that thought because it cannot be changed".

"I just treat her well; I always feel like talking to her when I meet her to encourage her so that she does not feel hopeless".

The literature study in this regard opposes the findings of this study because Fulton and Bendiksen (1976:410), Parkes (1986:14) and Brothers (in Van den Hoonaard, 1997:542) all mentioned that the widow is often stigmatised and isolated by the community because she is regarded as less fortunate. This was not mentioned by community members in this study and therefore, it is a unique finding.

* **Some members of society are concerned that elderly people prescribed customs without grounding**

Most of the community members who participated in this study were concerned that

some of the customs have no grounding and are no longer relevant. They feel that life has changed altogether, for example women are working these days and consequently some rules are practically difficult for the widow to follow. They are also concerned that no reasons are given by elders, but only rules. One community member gave an example of her neighbour who is a nurse, who had to go and request the matrons to let her leave work at four daily because she is supposed to be home by sunset; while the other one said that her friend is very active in the church, being chairperson of some organisations and yet she could not go the church. These were statements made by the community members with regard to rules that are not grounded. On the contrary, there are those who think that these rules have to be honoured.

“Their implication is just that our elders believed in them during those days; but those things don’t work you know; that is why I say it is just to inconvenience people”.

“... my belief is that it is our culture but I don’t know, I don’t go for it”.

“... you know our parents used not to tell us the why part but they would just say you don’t do this, don’t do this ...”.

These findings are unique to this study because there is nothing in literature about the grounding of the Batswana customs with regard to widowhood and the mourning process. Frude (1991:345) however, found that the tendency within families is that they follow the deceased’s wishes with regard to the burial, and in addition to these, they generally comply with cultural norms prescribed for a period of mourning. These author’s view is consistent with the findings of this study with regard to cultural norms, though the aspect of grounding of cultural norms is not mentioned.

*** Some members of society believe that the widow has to follow the culture to remain with a clear conscience**

The community members interviewed seemed confused about this matter. There are those who believe that even if they do not think that those rules are grounded, they think it is safer for the widow to follow them to clear her conscience; she should rather avoid

being blamed or accused for whatever may happen. Three out of seven interviewed think there is no need to follow the rules. The following are some of the views quoted directly from transcriptions of interviews:

“My belief about the mourning process is that one should follow the rules and restrictions; I like it because it is our culture and it is safe practice to follow the rules”.

“My belief is based on the culture of our ancestors because modern things are confused”.

“When you find the elders doing something, it means they have observed something, so it means you must comply”.

It is clear from the above quotations that there are contradicting views of the community members with regard to the rules to be followed by widows during widowhood and the mourning process. Some think that culture is important while others think that it is not.

Community members who participated in this study seemed to agree with this view that culture should be reviewed in line with the present era. Rosenblatt (in Stroebe *et al.* 1993:110) supports the existence of various cultural norms and that in other cultures, a person bereaved from a spouse or significant person is expected to mourn for a lifetime.

The need for support to the widow, which includes emotional, spiritual, financial and social support as well as society's attitude towards the widow, has been discussed. The next major category is the perception of the widow's mourning process as discrimination against women.

4.3.2.4 Perceptions of the widow's mourning process as discrimination against women

Column D of table 4.11 indicates the fourth major category of the Batswana community's perceptions and beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process as found in this study. This major category is discussed in a one sub-category namely:

- Perceptions of mourning restrictions being applicable to women only.

- **Perceptions of mourning restrictions being applicable to women only**

Community members generally perceived mourning customs and rules being discriminatory because they seemingly apply to women only. Table 4.18 below indicates further categories which were identified during data analysis with regard to the community members' perceptions of the mourning restrictions being discriminatory.

Table 4.18 Perceptions of mourning restrictions being applicable to women only

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mourning clothes are viewed as attaching the stigma to widows. * Widows are prevented from moving freely because of the beliefs. * Widows are prevented from engaging in relationships with men. * Widows are blamed for the death of their husbands. * Strict cultural rituals to be performed viewed as inflicting more pain to the widow. * Mourning rules are not strict on men.

- * **Mourning clothes are viewed as attaching the stigma to widows**

Community members interviewed for this study expressed the opinion that mourning clothes worn by the widows stigmatise them. They are thus discriminated against wherever they go. Some said that because people die under different circumstances, for example that the man is killed and the wife is suspected; then every time some people see a widow they utter unpleasant remarks irrespective of whether that particular widow may be innocent. Some of the statements quoted directly from interviews are as follows:

"To me this attire seems to be aggravating the problems because you are now conspicuous, everybody sees you wherever you are whether town or wherever 'oh she has lost a husband' or 'Oh! they are these ones who want money'".

"I feel widowhood for a woman in particular is really oppressive because I don't know why did men choose to use just a string ... and have chosen that a woman

should wear black attire from head to toe”.

The above quotations state clearly that some community members do not condone the black clothes. They do, however, realise that it seems to be a tradition which is there to stay because it is culture and it will need intensive negotiations with community leaders to be addressed. The literature supportive of this view is as stated in Parkes (1986:199) that a black attire was worn by widows, during the Victorian era; which was later on replaced by an arm band and a dark dress. Parkes (in Kalish, 1985:207) mentioned that widows are stigmatised because even those who were friendly to them become embarrassed in their presence. It is, however, not stated why a black dress of the Victorian widows was replaced at a later stage. This may be influenced by changes that take place in society because even among the Batswana people, changes are taking place such as wearing a navy blue attire instead of black.

* **The widows are prevented from moving freely because of the beliefs**

Besides being stigmatised, community members also viewed being restricted from free movement as discrimination. They stated that this is only applicable to widows and not widowers or any other bereaved person. The following views are quoted directly from interviews with community members:

“And I am sure if it was a man, he would just wake up, get into a car and go, without asking anybody”.

“This is why I say some of these things can cause stress and loneliness because now you must stay there and depend on people to visit you ...”.

Community members who felt that women are oppressed, emphasised the need to review the rules though they were not hopeful that it might change. One community member sounded bitter about the oppression of widows when she explained that her neighbour was called by the doctor by whom her husband has been treated before he died. She was refused permission to go by her sister-in-law who told her that she was supposed to be mourning and not moving around. This finding is unique to this study.

* **Widows prevented from engaging in relationships with men**

According to the findings of this study widows are not supposed to engage in any form of relationship with men during mourning. It is believed that both will suffer from a fatal disease ("boswagadi"). Here again community members felt that it was oppression of women because widowers are free to associate freely with women. These community members, however, felt that the widow should stay away from forming relationships though they do not believe that she will infect the man. The following are statements quoted from transcriptions of interviews with community members:

"You know their belief is still strong that a woman should not sleep with men ... during that process; So it is just a way of discriminating, restricting and jealousy".

"So really women are usually victims of this widowhood because there she is in black attire, home-bound you know. In this Tswana culture I usually fail to understand whether a widower, does have these restrictions".

These quotations clearly indicate that community members support the widow against the perceived discrimination. This rule seems to be applicable in Black culture because other literature did not mention it except Pauw (1990:76) whose study was conducted among Black South Africans. It is therefore unique for the Blacks. Besides being discriminated against like this, widows are also blamed for the death of their husbands.

* **Widows are blamed for the death of their husbands**

Most community members (five out of seven) mentioned that widows were often blamed for the death of their husbands. This was viewed as discrimination because the interviewees stated that men were not blamed likewise. Examples from the participants, quoted directly, are as follows:

"When a man has died the relatives usually say the wife has killed the husband, so you know those things must be erased at all costs".

"Maybe men are not supposed to die, because when he dies you have killed him".

This is unique for this study, because it was not confirmed with literature. The

oppression is also perceived with regard to strict cultural rituals to be performed after the death of the husband, which will be discussed next.

* **Strict cultural rituals to be performed are viewed as inflicting more pain to the widow**

Community members also observed that the rituals were for widows only. Such rituals include the 'cleansing' or 'washing', lighting of candles at night, being ushered to other households and sprinkling mixtures at the crossroads, including those performed at the end of mourning. Statements of the community members' words, quoted from interviews, are as follows:

"Men, when they have lost wives, I have not seen anything, me and you even when we move around in town we never notice widowers; so this widowhood seems a woman's thing, and it is oppressive".

"Not for the widower, hence I'm saying I'm having a problem, I feel it is oppressive".

* **Mourning rules are not strict on men**

Community members who participated in this study complained that all the mourning restrictions were not strictly applied to men, hence this further category was identified. According to them, mourning seems to be for women but not for men. Some of the examples given are that there is full mourning attire for men, they move around as they wish, they talk and associate freely with women and they seem not to experience negative attitudes that widows are subjected to. The following are statements of quotations from transcriptions of interviews with community members:

"Why men can do this and women cannot do it and they were sleeping in one bed; what makes the difference?"

"Maybe I don't know but I have not heard that he must be home at sunset to switch on the lights, or he is not supposed to go to other people".

These community members' views were supported by literature where Kastenbaum (1977:263) stated that many cultures have specific mourning signs. Here the concern is that if the culture supports such signs, why they do not apply to all mourners. One community member expressed the opinion that they need a platform to address this.

Pincus (1974:76) supports the views of community members in this study, because he stated that many widows feel rejected and isolated whereas widowers are treated like 'eligible bachelors'. This confirms that these findings are not unique to this study as it was observed by Pincus (1974:176) in his study that widows are treated differently from widowers.

The findings on the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process, as well as the Batswana Community's perceptions and beliefs about the mourning process have been discussed. To follow is the discussion of the combined findings of both the widows and the community members.

4.3.3 The combined findings of the widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as the community's perceptions and beliefs about the mourning process

The findings of the combined samples of this study will be discussed according to the main categories as discussed in this chapter, starting with the **experience of feelings of isolation due to stigmatization of widowhood.**

*** The experience of feelings of isolation due to stigmatization of widowhood**

The widows' feelings of isolation due to the stigma attached to widowhood have been supported by the community. Both the widows and community members are in agreement that the black attire that they wear stigmatises them. This is evident from the researcher's observation that widows who put on black attire are being isolated while those who do not are not easily identified by the community, and are treated like other people. Out of the eight widows interviewed three did not dress in the mourning attire.

They viewed it however, that some of the rules have to be followed to show self respect. These are, amongst others not moving around, not visiting other households

because they fear rejection, and avoiding relationships with men. Though the community members acknowledged that the mourning attire stigmatises the widow, on the other hand they felt that she should comply because it is culturally sanctioned. The widows do not only feel isolated and stigmatised but also **experience stressful life due to the customs prescribed for them by society.**

* **The experience of stressful life due to customs prescribed by society**

Widows feel that it is necessary for them to follow the customs prescribed for them to avoid being rejected by society. They acknowledge that some of the customs such as restricted movement, not visiting other households, not attending social gatherings, especially the church, and the rituals of cleansing, contribute to their stressful life. Community members also acknowledge that these customs make life difficult for the widow; they view the customs as "inconveniencing" to the widow. With regard to the customs, community members were particularly concerned that they were applicable to the widows and not to the widowers. They therefore viewed them as discriminatory. Despite viewing the customs negatively, community members support the restrictions imposed and believe they should follow the rules so that if anything goes wrong such as the alleged possibility of killing children, livestock and crops, they may not be blamed.

As far as the disruptions of family relationships are concerned, both the widows and community members mentioned that widows are being blamed for the death of their husbands. Despite the negative utterances that in-laws make, they also expect the widow to share the estate with them. According to the widows this usually causes conflict between them, and their in-laws. Despite being subjected to this conflict, **widows feel that they are still supported by the other people, such as their own family, friends and neighbours.**

* **Experience of the support provided by internal and external support systems**

Most of the widows who participated in this study mentioned that they got the support from their siblings, friends and neighbours rather than from the in-laws. The support that they received included emotional support, by being there at the time of need; and

socially by providing companionship during the time of loneliness. Community members, on their part mentioned that they support the widow by visiting her and keeping her company; financially by donating as organised groups in the society. They also mentioned spiritual support by means of different church groups coming to pray at the time of bereavement, which was also acknowledged by the widows. These prayers were said to be necessary for them because they **experienced feelings of hopelessness due to their loss**, so both the widows and the community members agree that the widows need to be supported.

* **Experience of feelings of hopelessness resulting from loss of husband**

Widows mentioned that loss of a partner is a painful experience because they are lonely and the situation is aggravated by the fact that they will never enjoy such companionship again. Most of them expressed feelings of denial, and that domestic matters, like disciplining children, become difficult. Community members, on the other hand acknowledged that widows are lonely, they miss the company of their husbands, and that children become difficult to discipline.

With regard to loss of dignity widows expressed feelings of unworthiness and that they feel unprotected and insecure, since the husband is the person that gave them dignity.

This was not mentioned by community members. The loss of the bread winner, which results in financial loss, was emphasised by both widows and community members. Young widows were particularly worried about the education of children while older widows felt they could not meet their basic needs without their late husband's income.

Community members did acknowledge that it becomes difficult for the widow to maintain the family without the husband's income. Despite the financial strain, **over responsibility also resulted due to the absence of a partner**.

* **Experience of over responsibility due to the absence of a partner**

Widows were concerned particularly about the care of household repairs and looking after the livestock. As it is the Batswana heritage to own livestock, the widows felt concerned that they could no longer manage such a responsibility. Some sold the

livestock though with guilt feelings. This was not mentioned by community members.

Another aspect of this study that was expressed as a concern was that community members condemned the customs, as they are discriminatory and they only affect women. Widows themselves did not mention this feeling of discrimination, except the difficulties they experience during the mourning process. The studyer does not necessarily view the widows' silence about discrimination as disagreement with the matter, but that they want to be perceived to be complying with the set rules.

4.4. CONCLUSION

The realisation of data collection as well as data analysis was described, followed by the discussion of study findings with regard to the Batswana widows' experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as the community's perceptions and beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process. The significant findings with regard to the Batswana widows experience are isolation, stress due to customs to be followed, loneliness and over-responsibility. The community members' perceptions are that mourning is stressful and it is aggravated by the cultural rules, and they feel strongly about the discrimination against women during the mourning process and advocate that it needs to be addressed. Both the widows and community members mentioned the same concerns with regard to widowhood and the mourning process. In the next chapter the conclusion, shortcomings and recommendations will be discussed. Guidelines for psychiatric nurses to facilitate the support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process, will be referred to.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, SHORTCOMINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO THIS STUDY, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO FORMULATION OF THE PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR PSYCHIATRIC NURSES IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT MECHANISMS THROUGH WHICH THE BATSWANA COMMUNITY CAN BE MOBILISED TO ASSIST THE WIDOW DURING WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the study findings were discussed. The findings were supported by direct quotations from the interviews with the participants as well as a follow up literature confirmation. In this chapter the conclusions and shortcomings will be discussed, recommendations will be made for nursing education, nursing research as well as for nursing practice, with special reference to the formulation of guidelines for psychiatric nurses to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions will be made from the findings, literature study and confirmation as well as the field notes. Data analysis resulted into five major categories with regard to the widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as four major categories with regard to the community's perceptions and beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process of the Batswana people. These two sets of data will be discussed separately.

5.2.1 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE BATSWANA WIDOW'S EXPERIENCE OF WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

Conclusions about the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process will be discussed according to five main categories as reflected in table 4.1.

5.2.1.1 Conclusions about the Batswana widows' experience of feelings of isolation due to of widowhood

The conclusion made from the findings is that a widow experiences feelings of isolation due to stigmatisation during her widowhood. She feels **shunned by society** due to the cultural beliefs associated with widowhood and the mourning process such as being feared for the potential harm of infesting other people with the bad luck.

The various cultural practices enforced on her by the community due to the belief system leads to an experience of being **imprisoned** by the **discriminatory restrictions**. Her social life also appears extremely restricted because she is denied the freedom of association with people, specifically men. The fact that she is closely watched by society, seems as though her independence is taken away because she has to live up to their expectations of having to stay indoors. In addition, her lack of freedom seems to be compounded by being restricted from performing her usual activities such as attending social gatherings. It also strikes one that she experiences difficulty of having to be home at sunset for setting a candle in her bedroom and for washing her mourning clothes which must be done at night.

5.2.1.2 Conclusions about the widow's experience of stressful life due to the customs prescribed by society

A conclusion that can be made is that the Batswana widow's mourning is extremely stressful because of being expected to **fulfil the customs prescribed by society**. These customs seem to make it difficult for the widow to mourn according to her feelings because she has to satisfy societal expectations of the mourning process. These expectations of having to be 'cleansed' of bad luck and to follow the mourning customs seem to be frustrating to the widow because she has no choice even if she does not

believe in the Batswana customs. The widow ultimately appears to find her independence being stripped in that she does not live up to her expectations but those of the community.

During the time that she needs support she experiences her family relationships as disrupted. This disruption in relationships is particularly by the widow's in-laws who usually blame her for being responsible for her husband's death. Based on the bitterness of the in-laws they also tend to frustrate the widow by being too prescriptive and by uttering negative statements which seem to hurt the widow. Further disruption in relationships is also caused by her failure to comply with the customs which then predispose her to the threats of being reported to the chief or to being rejected by the community.

5.2.1.3 Conclusions about the widow's experience of the support provided by the internal external support systems

In conclusion, the support offered by internal and external systems would appear that she does **feel supported** from her own family members and neighbours but not from the in-laws who have become her close family after marriage. This support, however, strikes one as limited to the time of bereavement and thereafter sustained only by a few family members. It further appears that the friends and neighbours fail to sustain this much needed support because of being unsure of what to do especially with restrictive customs.

A further conclusion is that the widow leans strongly on her own internal belief system. She is consoled by her trust in God having planned this and her faith that He will take care of the situation. It seems as though the support by the church becomes an important means of spiritual comfort.

It can further be concluded that the widow strongly depends on the spiritual support of her Christian belief system. She seems to be consoled by her trust in God having planned her husband's death and her faith that He will take care of the situation.

5.2.1.4 Conclusions about the widow's experience of feelings of hopelessness resulting from loss of her husband

It becomes very clear from this study that she has a **feeling of hopelessness**. This hopelessness seems to stem mainly from the loss of the emotional support of the husband. It would appear that her feeling of loss is aggravated by loneliness of having nobody to share her painful experience with because relatives, friends and neighbours leave her before she can adjust to the situation. It also appears according to the findings that the widow's emotional pain is aggravated by the bitterness of the in-laws whom she could be sharing her pain with. The impact of her emotional pain is reflected in her difficulty in accepting the death and her crying outbursts when this loss becomes too much to carry.

A further conclusion can also be made that it strikes one as though the Batswana women depend on their husbands for identity, safety and security hence their experience of a **feeling of unworthiness** after his death. This unworthiness is expressed in her feelings of loss of dignity, emptiness and sense of insecurity. Her lack of confidence also seems to be observed through her difficulty to discipline her children which can be motivated by the fact that according to the Batswana culture, the man appears to be a dominant figure hence children listen to the father rather than the mother.

Due to the stress brought about by the impact of loss it seems that widows develop psychological and physical stress-related symptoms. The loss of husband seems to contribute to the widow's loss of financial security, which creates fears that she may fail to educate her children.

5.2.1.5 Conclusions about the widow's experience of a sense of over responsibility due to absence of partner

The fact that the widow does not, within the Batswana community, have responsibility for certain aspects and suddenly loses her husband, contributes to her acting over responsible in the absence of her partner. All these seem to culminate in a process of being **difficult** for her to **manage the disrupted family life**. The disruption of family life

strikes one as difficult for her to manage due to the fact that she has lost the person she used to share important family matters with as well as the maintenance of household property, which has become her responsibility. The maintenance of livestock in particular seems to aggravate the conflict that the widow faces of whether to keep or sell them and that these are usually linked to the in-laws who are not supportive.

5.2.2 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE BATSWANA COMMUNITY'S BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

Conclusions about the Batswana community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process will be discussed according to four major categories as reflected in table 4.11.

5.2.2.1 Conclusions about the Batswana community's perceptions about the effects of the mourning process

The conclusions that can be made is that it appears as though the Batswana community do perceive that widowhood and the mourning process do have effects on the widow. Among these effects is their **acknowledgement of her emotional stress** which seems to be due to her loss of a companion. It also seems that the community realises that the widow undergoes a grieving process as well as loneliness. This loneliness is perceived to be due to the fact that she has lost her major emotional support, which makes it difficult for her to accept his death.

From the findings of this research it also appears that the community perceives that the widow's **role is confused by the customs** prescribed for her during the mourning process. Some of these customs acknowledged by the community are that she has to be suspended from performing her daily activities by staying indoors to live through the mourning process. They seem to believe that because she is believed to be having bad luck, she has to undergo certain rituals to be allowed to enter other households. The community further acknowledges that she is left with both her own responsibilities as well as those usually allocated to her husband. She, for example, has to attend to domestic matters including the raising of children.

5.2.2.2 Conclusions about the Batswana community's perceptions of the beliefs of the customs that the widow has to follow

From the findings of this study it would appear that the Batswana community hold beliefs about the widow in mourning. These beliefs include having to maintain the **in-laws' name and dignity**. It seems as though the community believe that she has to follow the rules in order to respect herself and society. These rules include dressing in mourning attire, which she washes at night, as well as being restricted from attending public gatherings because she has to be home at sunset.

The conclusions that can be made are that the community seems to restrict the widow due to the **fear that she may transfer the curse of death** to them. This fear seems to be aggravated by the belief that contact with the widow poses a threat especially sexual contact which could cause a disease. It is also believed that her tracks are harmful to cattle and maizefields. The community also believes that all these dangers could be neutralised by washing' at the end of the mourning process.

5.2.2.3 Conclusions about the perceptions of the need to support the widow

From the findings of this study it does appear that the community perceives the need to support the widow during her mourning process. They do acknowledge that due to the difficulty she is undergoing she does **need to be supported** emotionally, spiritually and socially during her mourning process. It strikes one, however, that she gets her emotional support from her own family and those people whom she is closely associated with by virtue of residence, work and other social affiliations. These people appear to pay frequent visits at the time of bereavement. The spiritual support seems to be from her church as well as the traditional healer who 'cleanses' her family from the curse of death. With regard to the social support, organised community groups seem to be of much help both with practical, material and financial support. Some community members also seem to perceive the younger widow's need to be oriented about the expectations of her role during mourning, as well as helping her with the discipline of children.

With regard to the **society's attitude towards the widow**, it can be concluded that the

attitude is conditional as it was observed that the community's attitude is positive towards those widows who comply with the rules, but negative towards those who don't.

Another controversy was picked up when the same community members who feel that the widow must strictly adhere to the rules and customs at the same time feel that they have no grounding or meaning. They also seem to think that because these customs are simply being upheld by the elder members of the community, they follow them to remain with a clear conscience. Some even seem to think that the rules are merely to make the widow feel uncomfortable and to make her life difficult. It can therefore be concluded that the community's beliefs in this regard are confused, which shows that they are not sure of the purpose that the Batswana customs serve in widowhood and the mourning process.

5.2.2.4 Conclusions about the Batswana community's perceptions of the widow's mourning as discrimination against women

From the findings of the community's perceptions of the widow's mourning process it seems that they perceive it as discrimination against women. A conclusion that can be reached is that the community appears to have noticed that most of the **restrictions** during the mourning process are more **applicable to widows and thus to women only**. It would appear that the community think that because men are more domineering in society, they are responsible for these rules, namely to restrict women, yet widowers are more free. Some community members even think that some rules are motivated by jealousy of men and that widows are not supposed to look beautiful because they will attract other men. They seem to believe that the culture of black clothes is to stigmatise the widow and to inflict more pain.

It can be concluded therefore that the community seems to perceive that the widow is more restricted in moving freely, engaging in relationships as well as having to adhere to certain rituals. They also seem to think that these rules are not applicable to men and that widows often suffer the blame of being responsible for the death of their husbands when this is not the case with widowers. Because the community members who participated in this study were women, it appears to be the reason why they view the customs as gender motivated, moreover that culture seems to oppress women. Some

participants felt strongly that now that gender issues are being addressed, widowhood and the mourning process of the widows should also be questioned.

5.2.3 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT BOTH SETS OF FINDINGS RE THE BATSWANA WIDOW'S EXPERIENCE AS WELL AS THE COMMUNITY'S BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

The conclusion that can be made in this regard is that the widows seem to blame the community for isolation, discrimination and stigmatisation. These experiences contribute to her feelings of bitterness of not being part of the community. The community on the other hand seems to think that they do not isolate the widow in bad faith but that she should understand that it is the Batswana culture and therefore it should be respected. The widow's bitterness also seems to follow from the fact that she is believed to have bad luck and that she is potentially dangerous to other human lives, animals and crops. This therefore indicates that the widow experiences extreme frustration during widowhood and the mourning process, because of the treatment she gets from the community.

It strikes one that due to discriminatory restrictions, the widow feels lonely and imprisoned because the community tends to avoid her even when she is allowed to visit certain public places. The rejection that she experiences from the community leads to her withdrawal and fear of visiting even her closer associates because of the fear of being blamed if anything happens after contact with her. They therefore think that it is rather safe not to go anywhere, especially to households, and as a result they resort to visiting public places like shops, banks, legal offices and others.

Although the findings project the widow's experience it also became clear in this study that there are groupings of beliefs. There are those widows who believe that they must comply with the customs and rituals of the mourning process and those that do not see a need to do so. The same difference in beliefs was also picked up with community members: the one group believes that widows should follow the customs while the other group criticises the customs as ungrounded and unnecessary.

5.3 SHORTCOMINGS

The following is a discussion of shortcomings as experienced and observed by the researcher:

Initially, the study was intended to cover a fair proportion of participants from the rural and sub-urban communities. It was however difficult to get co-operation from the rural based widows and community members as they were not free to give consent. The researcher ended up interviewing more of the enlightened and suburban widows and community members because of their understanding and willingness to participate in the study. Some potential participants who indirectly declined to participate, kept on postponing the date of the interview until it was too late and the researcher had to contact other potential participants.

The researcher suspected that some information was held back either because the topic as such might have been too sensitive or because the discussion about widowhood and the mourning process is a taboo in the Batswana culture. Another possibility could be that participants thought that because the researcher is a black person, some information is obvious to her and need not be explained.

Some participants, because of their educational background such as teachers and nurses, were suspected of holding back their beliefs because they did not want to be associated with the specific cultural practices. The general impression that culture belongs to the old and the uneducated people cannot be overlooked here, because younger people tend to ignore, or pretend not to believe in certain cultural practices.

The community members' views may be biased and not representative of a true reflection of the predominant attitudes towards the widow because the researcher depended on the widows to refer her to them, and those were obviously people with whom the widows had good relationships such as friends and neighbours. This is a shortcoming of the sampling technique used in this research. The fact that only women were interviewed as community members could also have added to possible shortcomings.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NURSING EDUCATION, NURSING RESEARCH AND PSYCHIATRIC NURSING PRACTICE

In this section recommendations for nursing education, nursing research and nursing practice will be made. These recommendations will be made with reference to the findings of the study, the literature, as well as the conclusions.

5.4.1 Recommendations for nursing education

Recommendations for nursing education should be aimed at assisting psychiatric nurses in the development of skills that will enable the nurses to mobilise the community as a support system to support the widows during widowhood and the mourning process. The following are the recommendations based on the conclusions made for this study:

- 5.4.1.1 The findings of this research will be valuable when included in the curricula of the four years basic programme of nursing especially within the psychiatric nursing curriculum, and the one year diploma in Psychiatric Nursing, where students learn to deal with the support of various groups. It could make them more sensitive towards cultural diversities.
- 5.4.1.2 To include both findings and guidelines in the in-service programmes for nurses who are qualified and working in the community so that they become more sensitive to widow's needs and thus support them through their mourning process.
- 5.4.1.3 To activate psychiatric nurses through workshops to be competent and effective in counselling of groups such as those for widows and to facilitate change within a community as well as the establishment of support groups such as widow support groups, family support groups, neighbours or friends support groups.
- 5.4.1.4 To activate psychiatric community nurses to establish and facilitate community forums such as widow's forum through which issues that are of major concern

to them can be addressed.

5.4.2 Recommendations for nursing research

According to the findings, literature, conclusions and shortcomings of this research the potential for further research in the field of widowhood and the mourning process as well as studies on bereavement suggest the following possible areas:

- 5.4.2.1 The willingness of traditional leaders to review the customs relating to widowhood and the mourning process.
- 5.4.2.2 The impact of cultural beliefs on the psychological wellbeing of widows in the Batswana community.
- 5.4.2.3 The willingness of the Batswana community to adjust the cultural practices related to widowhood and the mourning process.
- 5.4.2.4 The readiness of psychiatric nurses to be involved in support programmes for the widow's.
- 5.4.2.5 An exploration of the effectiveness of the widow's spirituality in coping with widowhood and the mourning process.
- 5.4.2.6 The role played by the church in the support of a widow during her mourning process.
- 5.4.2.7 An ethnographic study on the observation of the behaviour of rural widows during widowhood and the mourning process.
- 5.4.2.8 An exploration of the views of the Batswana men with regard to mourning customs of the widow's.

5.4.3 Recommendations for psychiatric nursing practice

Recommendations for psychiatric nursing practice have reference to the specific

guidelines as set out in goal number three (see 1.2.3) under the objectives of this research, to formulate guidelines for psychiatric nurses to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process. The following are guidelines for psychiatric nurses to facilitate the widow to handle mourning effectively, as well as mobilising the community to support the widow.

5.4.3.1 Guidelines to facilitate the widow to handle mourning effectively

From the findings and conclusions it seems that there is a need for the widow to first understand widowhood and mourning in the cultural context of the Batswana people.

It may be necessary for her to learn about the customs. It will then be useful if she clarifies those that she accepts and those that she needs to negotiate with relevant people such as the elders in the family, certain community members or the chief. The widow's mechanisms to handle mourning effectively could be facilitated if she clarifies the following:

It could be helpful for her to clarify her values regarding certain customs she has identified as protective and therefore acceptable to her. Covey (1989:71) explains that feelings can be subordinated to values and that one's choice should be based on values but not on conditions which are motivated by feelings. If the widow then accepts to follow customs such as cleansing, not moving around as well as being home at sunset, it would be meaningful to ensure that the process of cleansing is well organised, and that it is done in a manner that ensures safety with regard to herbal mixtures used.

It could also be meaningful if she clarifies customs that she finds unacceptable which she needs to negotiate. She would then need to seek certain people to support her in the process of negotiating and being assertive, and she could do it with her family or friends who understand her values. She could then be protected as she visits places where she feels safe and not discriminated against; these would include public places such as shopping centres.

The widow could also be assisted to become aware of her use of various mechanisms to escape the customs during the mourning process. Some of these mechanisms are

those of using her work situation or the church as a reason for not wearing the mourning clothes or not abiding with the customs at all. It could therefore be helpful for her to become more congruent in her manner of reacting towards the customs; she could also be assertive regarding not following these customs which could help relieve stress of using such mechanisms to escape the practices that she finds unbearable.

In her choice of customs that are protective, it could be helpful if she considers that rituals such as admittance into certain households and sprinkling of crossroads with herbal mixtures could be helpful for her. By undergoing such rituals she will have an advantage of freely visiting those households and places thus avoiding isolation and restrictions of being prevented from visiting such places. It would be useful to her to realise that following these customs makes the community more supportive towards her.

If she chooses to adhere to the customs she should know which are these customs that she will be expected to follow; by doing this, it would be helpful to reduce the stress that goes with having to follow the customs against her will.

By being made aware of the conflict that the widow finds herself in regarding her personal value systems and customs that she has to abide with; it would be helpful to her to clarify this conflict by looking at those aspects that are positive and those that are negative to her, and to determine whether she cannot find situations that are more supportive and protective to her.

When the widow understands the mourning process and she is able to clarify her values with regard to the customs, the following guidelines are to mobilise support mechanisms to counteract her experiences during widowhood and the mourning process:

- * Psychiatric nurses have to ensure that there are ways in which the widow within the community can be allowed to verbalise the adverse effects and the difficulties of widowhood have on her because this might facilitate the support from the significant people in her life.

- * It could be useful if the widow identifies her support systems so that she could

be assisted to activate such people. One could look at firstly negotiating with the in-laws because they form her immediate family after marriage and that they are identified as a group that causes her stress. The widow's family, parents in particular could be activated to mediate between her and the in-laws so that there could be common understanding with regard to the cause of her husband's death; medical reports could possibly be used to clarify this issue, to avoid unnecessary blaming so that a healthy relationship is restored.

- * It could be useful if the widow establishes good contact with her family, friends and neighbours in order to build meaningful relationships with the closest family members or friends. These relationships could be strengthened when they are still happy so that during difficult times such as widowhood she may be sure to be given valued support.
- * It could be useful for the widow to clarify her spiritual needs so that by showing appreciation and acceptance of the members of her congregation visiting her during bereavement, they could be motivated to maintain those visits during her period of mourning. It could be necessary to compromise between her cultural and religious beliefs to ensure that she does not become confused, because she needs the support of the community; she may wish to attend the church services while the cultural prescriptions may not allow her. By clarifying both her cultural and spiritual needs she will be able to avoid confusion thus getting the support from both support systems.

As it is evident from the findings of this study that the widow has lost her self-worth the following guidelines will assist to mobilise mechanisms to have her self-worth and identity restored:

- * The widow may revive her sense of self-worth by taking stock of her strengths and capabilities so that her morale could be boosted thus improving her self-esteem. She may need to be counselled professionally as it could be difficult for her because she depended on her husband for identity.
- * It could be useful for the widow to learn new skills so that she could do some

of the duties that her husband used to do; if she cannot, it would be meaningful if she looked for someone or perhaps utilise her older children to assist her with duties such as maintenance of equipment, caring of domestic animals, basic maintenance of the car if possible. She could then handle duties such as payments of bills if these were done by her husband; special maintenance of equipment that cannot be done at home can then be taken for proper checking by relevant people. The livestock could need a special person, perhaps among her relatives to advise her with regard to whether to keep or sell them.

- * For the discipline of children it may be useful to establish ongoing communication with her children to address current issues within the home on continuous basis. This could help her children to express their needs in a clear and direct manner so that problems are resolved promptly thus avoiding conflicts. By promoting such a healthy relationship with her children they will learn to respect her and this will result in restoration at her sense of self-worth. It may also be useful for her to learn proper and healthy parenting skills to improve her family interaction, thus promoting her effective parenting.

5.4.3.2 Guidelines to mobilise the community to support the widow

- * The following guidelines are aimed at mobilising the community to be more supportive to the widow during widowhood and the mourning process. These guidelines will be based on the education that needs to be given to the community as well as mobilising support systems. To follow are guidelines for the psychiatric nurses to mobilise education of the community about widowhood and the mourning process, as well as clarifying the cultural needs:
- * In preparing the widow psychologically it seems as though the community can put in place strategies that could make sure that young children are educated about cultural beliefs of widowhood or mourning so that there is greater acceptance of the process of mourning.
- * It could be meaningful if the community would review which of the customs are really positive, protective and valuable, and which might be negative, and lead

to negative behaviour of the widow. They could be educated about the conflict these customs cause in view of the current times. An example could be that of work, considering various professions, where it could be helpful that the leadership of traditional leaders be shown the difficulty of someone who is working and who has to be at home before sunset, or having to be in the mourning attire. It could be useful to educate them about the inconvenience that these practices cause.

- * It could be of much benefit that the psychiatric nurse mobilises clarification of customs between the widow's family, her in-laws, friends and neighbours that they can become aware of when to visit the widow, so that they are not afraid to give her that support. Because the widow's friends may be ignorant, they may need to be educated about these customs so that they provide support freely without doubt or hesitation.
- * It could be meaningful to activate the church in mediating between the widow and her in-laws so that there will be common understanding of death within religious beliefs, making it clear that it is could be unjustifiable to blame her for the death of her husband. This type of religious education may benefit most community members, especially the young.

The following guidelines are aimed at mobilising support systems for the widow during widowhood and the mourning process:

- * Psychiatric nurses should develop counselling skills so that they are able to intervene effectively if the widows seek help from them.
- * To assist the widow to overcome her stress due to loss and grief it would be useful that family support be mobilised by requesting the necessary assistance from family members, friends or neighbours, to identify someone with whom she feels free to communicate her feelings and that could be supportive in the major decisions that she takes (Kleinke, 1991:28). The identified person could then be mobilised to allow the widow to express her feelings, avail herself when needed, and allow her the opportunity for activities not prohibited for her during

widowhood and the mourning process; these could help to occupy her mind to avoid emotional outbursts.

- * Relatives could be activated to restore the old culture of staying longer with the widow to support her through the adjustment of getting used to life without her husband.
- * It would be helpful if psychiatric nurses mobilise widow support groups that could visit the widow occasionally to share their experiences so that she can realise that she is not alone and that with time she will feel better. These widows could be those who went through the mourning process and have resolved it successfully. These support groups could also negotiate with relevant stakeholders with regard to the review of customs.
- * It seems to be necessary that the psychiatric nurse establishes forums between the traditional leaders, elders in the community as well as widows where there could be clarification of the purpose of these customs so that there could be sharing of experiences between these groups to see if they cannot negotiate for compromises between the positive and negative customs. This could provide widows with valuable information about customs so that they can make informed choices in abiding or not abiding with them.
- * It would be meaningful for the psychiatric nurses to facilitate forums even within the churches so that communities are educated about mourning, bereavement and grief processes so that through understanding, they could modify their attitudes of stigmatising and isolating the widows thus contributing to her stressful experiences.
- * Now that issues pertaining to women are on the national agenda, it could be useful if psychiatric nurses organise workshops through which they could mobilise women support groups and women pressure groups to challenge the tribal authorities through the traditional leaders (chiefs) about the discrimination against widows.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The objectives of this study namely, to explore and describe the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process as well as to explore and describe the community's beliefs about widowhood and mourning process and to formulate guidelines for psychiatric nurses to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process, have been achieved.

The literature study served as the grounding for the semi-structured interview schedule and provided reference for data collection and data analysis for this descriptive and explorative research. The findings of this study brought into light the experiences of widowhood and beliefs about the mourning process of the Batswana people.

Conclusions that can be made is that the Batswana widow experiences isolation, stigmatisation and discrimination due to customs that she has to follow during widowhood which culminate to stressful life. The community seems to realise that widowhood is a stressful process but because they think that the customs are important to protect them, they find it important for the widow to follow them, and this leads to the minimum support given to the widow especially if she does not abide with these customs.

Recommendations are made for nursing education, nursing research and psychiatric nursing practice. With psychiatric nursing practice specific guidelines are formulated for psychiatric nurses to assist the widow to handle the mourning process effectively, to negotiate with community members with regard to the evaluation of customs, and mobilising the community to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

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APPENDIX A

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Sir/Madam

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH : INFORMATION AND REQUEST FOR PERMISSION

I am a black student living among the Batswana people, and studying for a Master's degree in psychiatric community nursing at Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. I am busy with a research project for completion of my studies. My choice of research is on the Batswana widows and community members for the purpose mentioned below:

The purpose of this research is to

- explore and describe the Batswana widows experience of widowhood and the mourning process;
- explore and describe the Batswana community s beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process;
- formulate guidelines for psychiatric nurses to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

In order to achieve objectives, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with widows and community members in the areas of Mafikeng, Lichtenburg and Zeerust in the North West Province.

The criteria for inclusion are as follows:

In the case of widows, they must

- be a resident in one at the selected areas:
- have been married to a Batswana husband;
- be within their first twelve months of widowhood;
- have given consent to participate and to the use of an audio-tape during the interview; and.
- be able to communicate in Setswana or English.

Community members must

- be Batswana and from the same areas as above;
- be either close relatives, friends or neighbours of the participating widows;
- have given consent to participate and to the use of an audio-tape during the interview; and
- be able to communicate in Setswana or English.

The interviews for those who agree to participate will be conducted during April and May 2000. Interviews will preferably be conducted at the participants homes, and will last for about one to two hours per person. All the names of participants and research proceedings will be treated confidentially, and their participation is voluntary.

It will be appreciated if at least five widows are identified in your area. I will appreciate your timeous response so that I may be able to make further arrangements.

If more information is needed with regard to this research please call me at the abovementioned address or telephone numbers.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours faithfully

.....
M E MANYEDI (Researcher)

.....
DR M P KOEN (Leader)

.....
PROF M. GREEEF (Co-Leader)



CITY COUNCIL OF MAFIKENG

Chief Executive / Town Clerk & Other Departments : Private Bag X63
Mmabatho 2735

Tel: (018) 389-0111
Fax: (018) 384-4830
University Drive
Mmabatho 2735

Ref. No.:

Contact: M.P. MAY/mem

Your Reference:

10 May 2000

Ms M.E. Manyedi
P.O. Box 3402
MMABATHO
2735

Dear Madam

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH : INFORMATION AND REQUEST FOR PERMISSION

I refer to your letter in which you request permission to conduct a scientific research within the jurisdiction of Mafikeng Local Municipality.

Permission is hereby granted to conduct a scientific research relating to Batswana Widows within our area of jurisdiction. The various departments within Mafikeng Local Municipality will be informed of your endeavour and will assist you in this regard.

I trust you will find the above in order.

Yours faithfully

M.M. Moadira
ACTING MUNICIPAL MANAGER

**Barolong Boo-Ratshidi
P/Bag x 001
RATSHIDI
2739**

02 June 2000

Dear Mrs Manyedi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

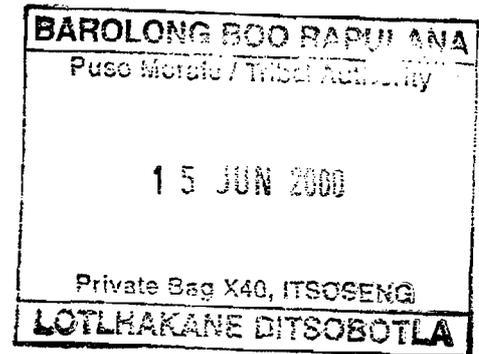
Receipt of your letter requesting to conduct research on the topic "THE BATSWANA WIDOWS' EXPERIENCE OF WIDOWHOOD, THE MOURNING PROCESS AND THE COMMUNITY BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS", is acknowledged.

It is my pleasure to inform you that you are granted permission to do your research, with the hope that you will contact the tribal council whenever you need help. We also hope that your study will benefit the Barolong Community.


.....
TRIBAL ADMINISTRATOR

PUSO-MORAFE YA BAROLONG BOORA-TSHIDI BAROLONG BOORA-TSHIDI TRIBAL AUTHORITY BAROLONG BOORA-TSHIDI STAMOWERHEID	
KGETSANA POSO/P.BAG/P. SAK X001 TEL: (0140) 848226	
2000-06-02	4
RATSHIDI VIA MABATHO	
PROFENSE YA BOKONE BOPHIRIMA R.S.A NORTH-WEST PROVINCE R.S.A NOORD-WES PROFINSIE R.S.A.	

REF NO : 2/9/21,
ENQUIRER : M. R. MOSIKARE



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RESEARCH: BASWANA WIDOWS EXPERIENCE OF WIDOWHOOD
AND THE COMMUNITY'S BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND
THE MOURNING PROCESS

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED THAT EVA MANGEDI HAS
BEEN GRANTED A PERMISSION BY THIS TRADITIONAL
AUTHORITY TO MAKE A RESEARCH IN LOTLHAKANE VILLAGE

THANK YOU.

TRADITIONAL OFFICER: 

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION AND REQUEST FOR WIDOWS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs

THE WIDOW'S PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH : THE BATSWANA WIDOWS' EXPERIENCE AND THE COMMUNITY'S BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

I am a black student living among the Batswana people and studying for a Master's degree in Psychiatric Community Nursing at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. I am doing research on the above topic and will appreciate it if you can take part in this research as a widow. The aims of this research are to

- explore and describe the Batswana widows' experience of widowhood and the mourning process;
- explore and describe the Batswana community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process; and
- formulate guidelines for psychiatric nurses to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

An interview will be conducted with you during April - May 2000 to gather information. A date and time will be arranged with you. This interview will last for one to two hours and will take place at your home. The researcher will conduct the interview in English or Setswana, depending on your preference. An audio-tape will be used to record the interview and it will be confidential between the researcher, research leaders as well as the co-coder only.

The audio - tapes will be erased after data analysis. Your name will not be disclosed during the research or publication of the results.

Participation is voluntary and you are kindly requested to complete the attached consent form to indicate that you are willing to participate in this research.

Thanking you in anticipation

.....
M E MANYEDI (Researcher)

.....
DR M P KOEN (Leader)

.....
PROF M. GREEEF (Co-Leader)

APPENDIX D

INFORMATION AND REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Mrs

THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH: THE BATSWANA WIDOWS' EXPERIENCE AND THE COMMUNITY'S BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

I am a black student living among the Batswana people and studying for a Master's degree in Psychiatric Community Nursing at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. I am doing research on the above topic and will appreciate it if you can take part in this research as a community member. The aims of this research are to

- explore and describe the Batswana widows' experience of widowhood and the mourning process;
- explore and describe the Batswana community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process; and
- formulate guidelines for psychiatric nurses to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

An interview will be conducted with you during April - May 2000 to gather information. A date and time will be arranged with you. This interview will last for one to two hours and will take place at your home. The researcher will conduct the interview in English or Setswana, depending on your preference. An audio-tape will be used to record the interview and it will be confidential between the researcher, research leaders as well as the co-coder only.

The audio - tapes will be erased after data analysis. Your name will not be disclosed during the research or publication of the results.

Participation is voluntary, and you are kindly requested to complete the attached consent form to indicate that you are willing to participate in this research.

Thanking you in anticipation

.....
M E MANYEDI (Researcher)

.....
DR M P KOEN (Leader)

.....
PROF M. GREEEF (Co-Leader)

APPENDIX E

CONSENT BY THE WIDOWS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

RESEARCH : THE BATSWANA WIDOWS' EXPERIENCE AND THE COMMUNITY'S BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

I hereby consent to voluntarily participate in the above research project. I accept that an interview will be conducted with me as personally arranged and that it will be audio-taped.

Signed at on this day of
2000.

.....
PARTICIPANT

APPENDIX F

FIELD NOTES FOR WIDOWS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Interview 1

Descriptive Notes

Mrs WA has been widowed since April 1999. She is just about to complete a year. A retired professional nurse, '68 years a tall and obese lady. She is not in mourning clothes because she refused to wear those black clothes. An interview was conducted in her spacious lounge, which is clean with expensive and well looked after furniture. Her two daughters and two grand children were in the kitchen. The research was given very warm welcome and she was willing to go through an interview, though she thought her mourning is not typical and suggested those widows that the researcher should interview. She emphasized that she is not the right person if I want to know about widowhood and mourning of the Batswana people because she grew up in a family with the coloured background and as a result she does not know the Batswana culture.

Reflective Notes

After reading the letter that requests her to participate she thought she would not be appropriate for this research because she is not a typical Motswana mourner though married to a Motswana man. She seemed to have overcome her grief, except that she emphasized a burden of activities that used to be done by her husband, e.g. paying of bills, checking and repairs of cars. She did not have much to say, which is unlike her as she is known by the researcher as a very extrovert talkative person. She maintained not being a typical mourner in the Batswana culture because all the Batswana beliefs are 'kaffir goed' according to her and she cannot follow that. It seems that the death of her husband was a relief to her, owing to a long period of nursing that she went through, as well as his critical illness status. To her it seems a waste of time to talk about mourning, because there is nothing special about it.

Demographic:

Date : 19 April 2000 @ 17H00 at the participant's home in Montshiwa, township, Mafikeng. The researcher was received by her daughter and ushered in, and led to the lounge. We attempted to sit in the dining room so that the tape could be on the table, but because the dining room is close to the kitchen, the noise of the children was audible. We then moved to the lounge and continued from there. It took less than an hour, about fifty minutes.

Interview 2**Descriptive Notes:**

Age : approximately fifty-eight years. She was just about to complete her mourning process. She was free at the time when the researcher came in because she was the one who chose the day and time. She preferred to be interviewed in her daughter's bedroom, which was quiet, at the time when the interview started, though there was noise from the children playing outside. She sat on the bed so that she could elevate her feet, which were recuperating from fractures (bilateral). The children were in the living room and she asked them not to disturb the interview process.

There were four adults in the house, though at the time of visit there were only two of them. She spoke up loudly, not fearing that anybody could overhear. She was not asked whether she had told her children about it. Most of them were the relatives' children whom she was staying with because her own children, two daughters were no longer at home; Her son was at the technicon.

Reflective Notes

The room that was used for an interview was at the front; there were children playing in the street and they were causing some disturbance. Just before we started she called them and requested them politely to play a distance away. They agreed respectfully.

She seemed to have been longing to talk to somebody about her experiences. She was

happy to be given such an opportunity. She was not reserved and the researcher was impressed by the manner in which she shared her experience. The problem encountered was that when she was asked about the immediate grief that she experienced she sobbed, and the researcher had to express empathy by touching and reflecting her understanding of the feelings of grief. She kept on reassuring the researcher that she was not the cause of her distress, and that she always became emotional when the loss of her son and husband was discussed.

Demographic notes

The interview was conducted on 18 March 2000, at 18H00. It was in summer, children playing around and making a lot of noise. The researcher and the participant moved from one room to another, trying to settle in a suitable one, with less noise. Ultimately the widow had to ask the children to play elsewhere, and the interview was ultimately conducted in her daughter's bedroom.

Interview 3

Descriptive Notes

Mrs WC is a fifty-nine year old widow in mourning. She is tall, average weight and she is an assistant nurse at the local hospital. She is dressed in black clothes, her husband died in March 2000. The researcher and she agreed on the day and time of the interview and it was a rainy afternoon. When the researcher arrived at her house she had already opened the gates for the researcher to drive through the driveway, which is sheltered. The researcher was then ushered into the house, which is clean and well looked after.

She preferred to be interviewed in Setswana. There were children in the house, who were her grandchildren whom she managed to keep in the bedroom to avoid disturbing the interview. However, the interview was disturbed by her elder son who came to visit, and later, her daughter. The researcher learnt that it was her birthday that day and she was turning sixty; she was still working, but on sick leave due to the grief symptoms.

Reflective Notes

Her responses were somehow restricted, as though she was aware of what she was not supposed to discuss or disclose. There was a clear indication that she was dependent on her husband as a breadwinner. She was mainly worried about the future, apparently because she still had money then. The problem was how she was going to sustain the family as a breadwinner. She felt insecure and unworthy and was particularly worried about how she would fund her daughter who was still at the University. She did mourn against her will.

Demographic Notes

The interview was conducted at the widow's house. It was on a public holiday, an Easter Monday 24th April 2000 in the afternoon. It was raining but the weather was cool.

Interview 4

Descriptive Notes

An elderly woman, seventy-three years of age. She is of average height, weight just above normal, but very obese. She has a pleasant personality, quite receptive. She was co-operative throughout the interaction between herself and the researcher. She is not dressed in mourning clothes, because of her religious belief. The interview took place on a Friday, at about twelve noon. The weather was fair, not very cold though it was in winter. Her house is in the village, not quite a remote area, which is about three kilometres from Mafikeng town.

At the time when the researcher got there, she was in the house, waiting as the appointment had been confirmed the day before. The radio was on and she was requested to switch it off just before the interview started. The telephone rang once during the conversation, and she had to call somebody who was working outside to come and answer. She stays with children and grandchildren in a house which is well furnished, e.g. there are three refrigerators which are in the dining-room, because the

kitchen is too small to accommodate them.

Reflective Notes

She is a pleasant person, willing to give information. She did not talk about culture apparently because she belongs to the religion that discourages cultural beliefs, hence she is not in mourning clothes. This is evident in her quoting of the Bible throughout the interview. She uses her hands a lot during the interview with responses frequently based on religious beliefs.

Demographic Notes

The interview took place on a Friday noon 12:00 on 5 May 2000. It was after the interview had failed on the previous day because of the fact that the children were around going up and down. Even though she read the letter she did not consider that privacy and quietness would be necessary for the interview. She just thought it was going to be an informal conversation. On the day of the interview there was minimal disturbance, though her daughter came in and wanted to talk to her, briefly.

Interview 5

Descriptive Notes

A sixty-eight year old lady, short in stature, slender and fully dressed in mourning clothes (black). She was busy in her kitchen when the researcher came in, and she immediately left what she was doing. She was receptive and welcomed the researcher.

She lives in a very big house, which is scantily furnished. Her granddaughter came in during the interview, and she came to greet, after which her mother also came, at about 18h30 from work and also came to greet. She told them that she was busy with the visitor and she was willing to talk and went on and on with her experience of widowhood.

Reflective Notes

She appeared a typical Motswana widow, who wears her mourning attire with pride.

She believes that she has to follow all the rituals so that she can later teach her children. She emphasized listening to the elders who will teach you right things to do. Her beliefs are strongly grounded on the Botswana culture, and she talked emphatically throughout and with confidence. Her emotions were shallow, as she could not really describe her feelings, except that it is painful to be a widow, even the pain she described poorly, focusing on the fact that it is important to mourn traditionally she spoke from the heart though. She gave an impression of being controlled by relatives, especially her in-laws whom she honours because of their experience. She still wished to know more which she said if her mother had not died when she was still very young, she would have learnt a lot. She conveyed a message of pride for wearing mourning clothes and she used a lot of gestures, especially hands when talking, seemed to be a dramatic person, talked non-stop and demonstrated when she really wanted to drive a point home. She expressed her utmost respect and love for her late husband, hence she mourns wholeheartedly.

Demographic Notes

The interview took place on Friday, the 5 May 2000. It was in the late afternoon at 17h00 at the widow's home at Lotlhakane village in the district of Lichtenburg. She would still have some if the researcher had not been not conscious of time. She wished the researcher could come back again because she wished that some help would come out of her imparting information, as she thought the researcher was a social worker.

Interview 6

Descriptive Notes

She is a middle aged woman, fifty-two years old and of average height. Her husband died in April (Easter) but she is not dressed in mourning clothes (black). She was warm and receptive, she has friendly appearance. The interview was conducted at the house, in which she is staying with her daughters and grandchildren. The researcher learnt when she got into the house that one of the widow's daughters is working at her family's dentist. She was excited to see the researcher at her home and wondered what it was

all about. The researcher had to explain so that she could understand. She then took the smaller children away to the kitchen while an interview was conducted in the family lounge. The youngest daughter (13 years) seemed curious because despite the fact that the mother requested them not to disturb the interview she kept on passing, pretending to be closing curtains, until she was again asked not to disturb.

Reflective Notes

The widow was open, relaxed and willing to give information. The researcher noticed however, that she lacks the ability to describe her emotions. Though she did not openly express in details, the attitude of the in-laws, it was apparent in her speech that they were unhappy about the fact that she did not wear the black mourning clothes. Her attitude was that she would not mind to put them on just to satisfy them but she was prevented by her own parents, from wearing the attire. Her other problem was work, which would be problematic if she should wear those mourning clothes. There were also clues of being worried that her in-laws may think that she somehow contributed to her husband's death. She seems to be experiencing a conflict because she does not like mourning clothes and rituals and on the other hand she wanted to prove her innocence to the in-laws.

Demographic Notes

The interview took place on a Saturday afternoon, 6 May, at about 16:30. It took place at the widow's house in the village of Lotlhakane in the district of Lichtenburg.

Interview 7

Descriptive Notes

Mrs CMG is a next door neighbour of widow number seven (WG). She is about fifty years old, and she is a lady teacher. They seem to be good neighbours because she looks after Mrs WG's two year old daughter sometimes when she is at work. She said that they treat each other as sisters, and that Mrs WG depends on her for help where necessary. Like other participants, it was not easy to secure an appointment with her

because of being busy, e.g. with church choir practices. Ultimately we managed to secure an appointment on a Wednesday afternoon at three o'clock.

The interview was conducted in her house's small sitting room which is well furnished and clean. Her neighbour's daughter was the only cause of constant disturbance, though her son also came in during the interview, but did not disturb much as he moved to his bedroom.

Reflective Notes

On the afternoon of the appointment, she was looking after Mrs WG's daughter, when she was at work. She was friendly and showed a positive attitude. Her response to questions was hesitant, brief and full of doubts, as though she was not sure of what to answer. She seemed very doubtful about issues regarding widowhood and the mourning process. There was an indication of knowing but she would answer briefly until she was probed to give more, she was not free in her answering, and seemed to hold back some information.

She however, seemed to have a positive attitude towards widows, and seemed to feel that it is necessary to follow, customs, though she contradicted herself by condemning some of the discriminative rules. Her emphasis however, was that they should be followed.

Demographic Notes

The interview was conducted on Wednesday, 16 August 2000. It was spring but still cold. It was in the afternoon, and it was quiet in the house because she was only found with her neighbour's little daughter. She stays in Mmabatho Unit 12, and is a teacher by profession.

Interview 8

Descriptive Notes

Mrs WH was widowed on 6 May 2000. Her husband was apparently suffering from

tuberculosis from the explanation she gave, though she maintained that he was bewitched. She lost her son in 1998, who was shot by police during a strike at a high school. The researcher met her while she came to pursue the son's case with Lawyers for Human Rights at Mafikeng. She stays in Zeerust. She was willing to participate in this research from the initial explanation that was given to her.

On the day of the interview she was quite relaxed, receptive and humble. She stays in a shack and next to it there is a single-roomed house which she said was built by her and the late husband and son. She has one son, who is attending a technical college. She stays with a sister's little girl of about five years old.

The interview proceeded smoothly except for her cellphone which warned of a low battery throughout. She says she did not charge it, as she went to town and she requested not to switch it off because she was expecting a call from lawyers. She had to wait for the researcher in town because the researcher could not go to the village alone, because she did not know where it was. She has a problem with the brother and sister in-law who are frustrating her by threatening to burn her shack. They seem to want to dominate her because she is younger and she was a second wife to her late husband. They also took away her step-children from her. She was quite open in relating her widowhood problems that she was experiencing.

Reflective Notes

Mrs WH seems to have been socialised with strict cultural norms as she grew up in a real rural area. She strongly believes that it is important for her to follow cultural prescriptions with regard to her widowhood and mourning process because she fears repercussions if she does not comply. Her beliefs in traditional healers is strong because she repeatedly mentions consulting them even with her late husband. Having been laid off from her normal activities because of widowhood she seems to experience financial problems because her husband left her with nothing and she used to do dressmaking. She strongly believes that sewing will make her sick if she does it during her mourning process. The researcher found it strange because she is young and relatively educated which is evident from the English words she used during the interview.

Demographic Notes

The interview took place on Tuesday, 1 August 2000 at the widow's home in a village outside Zeerust. It was in the afternoon at half past three 15:30. Home conditions confirmed that presently it is difficult to make ends meet, because she did not have enough furniture, and poverty was evident.

FOR THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Interview 1

Descriptive Notes

She is approximately sixty-five years old, a retired nurse, slender and clean in appearance. She stays in the village which is just separated by the main road from Montshiwa township. She stays with her husband, who is also a pensioner, her aunt whom she is looking after and her daughter and grand children.

When the interview started, the old lady (98 years) was outside. It was on a cold, cloudy day. Her husband came in during the interview and disrupted the process asking whether his wife knows anything about widowhood. He was drunk. Then the interview was also disturbed by two visitors later on. She has a spacious house, and the interview was conducted in the dining room so that we could use the plug and table. It was comfortable, she sent the grandchildren away so that they would not disturb.

Reflective Notes

The researcher had a warm welcome, though during the interview there was a lot of disturbance apparently because it is in the village with people coming in and out. She was also restless because of the old lady whom she had to keep a constant eye on. She was free to give answers, she shared the same views as her widowed friend, that she does not believe in mourning in the Batswana way. It may be motivated by the fact that she is a professional. She says her husband does not want her to mourn externally, but internally. She believes that mourning externally is satisfying for those who believe in it.

They apparently share views because they are long-standing friends who later became

family friends. Even their husbands seem to have supported them about mourning beliefs.

Demographic Notes

Date: 20 April 2000 at 15:00, at her home. On a cold cloudy afternoon. The researcher struggled to get to the place because of the recent construction of the road which made access to the house difficult.

Interview 2

Descriptive Notes

Mrs CMB is a friend to widow WB. They are both professional nurses; she is fifty-one years old, working at a clinic. She is married and has one son. The husband is self-employed and the son is working. The interview was conducted in her dining room in their very big house. She gave the researcher a morning appointment because she said, she functions better in the morning. It was quiet because there were only three adults in the house. She welcomed the researcher and offered her a chair.

Reflective Notes

The researcher got the impression of her not being a person who reveals her feelings easily. An interview with her was not free flowing, she responded with brief statements, needed a lot of probing and still would not readily come up with information. She seems to be completely against Setswana culture, thinking that widows need to be supported by all means. She does not support the mourning process of the Batswana because the person she said becomes isolated, even if she is a community person like her friend.

Demographic Notes

The interview was conducted on 20 March 2000. It was Monday morning at 07:00 because she likes waking up in the morning. The atmosphere was quiet and conducive to the interview throughout, with no disturbance at all.

Interview 3

Descriptive Notes

The participant is a sixty-two year old a lady teacher at a primary school in the rural village of Mafikeng. She is a neighbour (opposite) of widow no. 3 (WC). She preferred to be interviewed in Setswana, though during the course of the interview the researcher realized that she could have expressed herself well even in English.

The interview was conducted in her house which is in Montshiwa township in Mafikeng. Her house was very clean and expensively furnished. She was alone in the house at the time of the researcher's visit and there was nobody who interfered during the course of the interview.

Reflective Notes

The researcher was impressed by the participant's warm welcome despite the fact that they met for the first time. She is a receptive person, very friendly, and co-operative. She seemed to be denying knowledge of some of the customs about widowhood and mourning in the Botswana context. Even those that she disclosed she distanced herself from as though she was an outsider and not Motswana. She was, however, co-operative with answering of questions, though the researcher doubted her honesty.

Demographic Notes

The interview was conducted on a Wednesday, 26 April 2000 late in the afternoon at 16:30 (time chosen by her). She preferred this time because she is a teacher and this is the time she is at home, back from school. The environment was conducive with no disturbances.

Interview 4

Descriptive Notes

She is a fifty-four year old lady who stays with her husband and one daughter. She is a psychiatric nurse who opted for a voluntary severance package three years ago and is running several small business projects at home. When the researcher arrived at her house for the interview they were busy with two other ladies slaughtering and cleaning

chickens which they sell to the public. She explained that it was a woman s empowerment project. She, however, excused herself from the other ladies because we agreed on the day and time for the interview. Her daughter was in the family lounge with friends so the interview was conducted in the bedroom. She complained of flue but was willing to try her best to be interviewed.

Reflective Notes

She was in fact curious to know what actually the researcher wanted to know about widows and widowhood. She gave the impression of being a typical rural Motswana woman but she was skeptical about the mourning process, which she regarded as disciminating. She strongly feels that the Batswana culture oppresses women as men do not have many restrictions. The opinions she gave were typical of her because being a nurse by profession, she left the profession to serve in a women's forum as a politician. She is actively involved in women empowerment projects, and other political activities. She clearly expressed her beliefs and responded to questions with confidence.

Demographic Notes

The interview was carried out on a Sunday, 7 May 2000. It was in the afternoon at about three o'clock. At the time of the visit, the interviewee was busy slaughtering and cleaning chickens, with other women with whom she is involved in a women empowerment project. This caused a disturbance during the interview because she was frequently called.

Interview 5

Descriptive Notes

She is a middle aged, well built lady of forty-five years. She is a divorcee, staying with her three children. She stays three houses from widow five. She presents with a somehow shy nature, soft spoken and respectful. When the researcher arrived, on a Sunday afternoon, the children were playing outside in a big yard. The interview was then conducted in the sitting room of her six-roomed house. She also had visitors who

left immediately, as though they had been told that there would be a visitor coming for an interview.

Reflective Notes

The lady seemed a quiet person, who was reluctant to answer questions, though she indicated that there was no problem in her participating in research. Her responses were brief, often requiring the researcher to probe her in order to get full answers. She, however, managed to give reasonable information about her knowledge of widowhood and mourning. She was clear about her stance on culture, she is a culturalist. She criticised widows of her age, for ignoring culture.

Demographic Notes

The interview took place on Sunday afternoon, 7 May 2000. It was a cold afternoon.

Interview 6

Descriptive Notes

Mrs CMF is related to widow NO. 6 (WF) because their husbands were brothers. She had also been widowed about three years before though she was not staying with the husband at the time of his death. The researcher was referred to the first sister-in-law whose interview failed because she was ill and said that she could not talk about a widow because she was still grieved herself. The second one was not willing though she kept on postponing the appointment until ultimately she claimed not to have time for an interview as she was very busy. She finally referred me to the next one who also referred me to Mrs CMF. She was initially reluctant but when the researcher sat down with her and explained the confidentiality, she understood, though it also took time to ultimately secure an appointment.

On the morning of the appointment she was found ready and she welcomed the researcher. She apologised for having delayed to secure this appointment, that the researcher must not think that she was being difficult. The interview was conducted in her dining room which is spacious. There were several interruptions of visitors and telephone rings apparently because she is home most of the time. She is not working.

She is apparently selling fat cakes and soft drinks for a living. Her house is neat, well furnished and well cared for.

Reflective Notes

She seemed willing to talk though she kept on having excuses for not knowing about widowhood as she learnt from her parents. She gave an impression of being cultural, traditional and believes that it is very important to follow culture. She believes things go wrong if culture is not followed, hence many illnesses and deaths that we experience during our times, because widows no longer adhere to rules and restrictions. She blames especially young widows for not complying with mourning rules, suspects that diseases like AIDS may have been caused by lack of compliance.

She seemed to think that she had to give the correct answers though the researcher explained that it was about what she knew to be the Batswana culture as well as her observations and attitudes. She seemed, however, compassionate towards the widows and did not have negative attitudes towards them generally. The researcher's impression was that they were not close to Mrs WF; their relationship was such that they only met on certain family occasions. She saw Mrs WF at the time of bereavement, and did not have an opportunity to check on her because her own son was involved in an incident where they murdered a person with friends and got arrested. She was busy going up and down with the case.

Demographic Notes

The interview was conducted on a Tuesday morning the first of August 2000, at 08:00. The appointment was long outstanding because according to her she was a very busy person, as she was involved in several projects for a living. She was also a member of a local Clinic Committee.

At the time she frequently visited lawyers because of her son's case. She stays in a village at Mafikeng, and is not employed. She is fifty-nine years old and has six children.

Interview 7

She is a young thirty-four year old lady, short, very light in complexion and dressed in navy mourning clothes. She has a two-year old daughter. She works at the local bank, and seems to enjoy the work. She was widowed recently, with her husband having committed suicide by shooting himself in her presence. She stays with two nieces and her daughter. When the researcher arrived, on a Sunday late afternoon she was with two ladies, apparently relatives. They left after the researcher had arrived. The interview took place in her bedroom, because her niece was watching television with friends, in the lounge.

Reflective Notes

She was willing to talk and answered the questions readily and accurately. She seemed to have a conflict that her husband had problems of unemployment, hence he committed suicide but on the other hand she thought that he was irresponsible and his acts caught up with him. She felt that it was right to follow the culture of widowhood and mourning to avoid mishaps. Her responses seemed honest and she did not hide any information.

Demographic Notes

The interview took place on a Sunday afternoon, 9 July 2000. The place was quiet, with no disturbance encountered. Towards the end of the interview she was already worried that she had to light the candle because it was sunset. She had also poured the water to wash the mourning clothes.

APPENDIX G

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON THE BATSWANA COMMUNITY'S BELIEFS ABOUT WIDOWHOOD AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

1. How would you describe widowhood?
2. How would you describe the mourning process of a widow?
3. What do you see as the widow's role during widowhood?
4. What do you see as the community's role during widowhood and the mourning process of the widow?
5. What are your beliefs with regard to widowhood and the mourning process?
6. What help do you think your relative/friend/neighbour needs during her widowhood and the mourning process?
7. What help do you provide to the widow during her widowhood and the mourning process?
8. In your opinion whom do you think should assist the widow to cope with her widowhood and the mourning process?
9. How could the community support the widow during widowhood?
10. What is your attitude towards the widow?
11. What do you see as typical beliefs about the widow, widowhood and the mourning process amongst the Batswana people?

APPENDIX H

WORK PROTOCOL FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Dear Mrs du Plessis,

Thank you for agreeing to be my co-coder for the research data analyses.

The focus of my study is to

- * explore and describe the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process;
- * explore and describe the Batswana community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process; and
- * formulate guidelines for psychiatric nurses to facilitate the development of support mechanisms through which the community can be mobilised to assist the widow during widowhood and the mourning process.

Data collection was done in two phases

For the Batswana widow's experience of widowhood and the mourning process the in-depth phenomenological interview questions were as follows:

- * How does it feel to be a widow?
- * Tell me about your mourning process

For the Batswana community's beliefs about widowhood and the mourning process a semi structured interview schedule was used. The following questions were asked:

1. How would you describe widowhood?
2. How would you describe the mourning process?
3. What do you see as the widow's role during widowhood?
4. What do you see as the community's role during widowhood and the mourning process of the widow?

5. What are your beliefs with regard to widowhood and the mourning process?
6. What help do you think your relative/friend/neighbour needs during her widowhood and the mourning process?
7. What help do you provide to the widow during her widowhood and the mourning process?
8. In your opinion whom do you think should assist the widow to cope with her widowhood and the mourning process?
9. How could the community support the widow during widowhood?
10. What is your attitude towards the widows?
11. What do you see as typical beliefs about the widow, widowhood and the mourning process amongst the Batswana People?

The following sets of data are included:

- * Eight transcripts of the in-depth phenomenological interviews conducted with the widows, as well as their field notes.
- * Seven transcripts of the semi-structured interviews conducted with community members, as well as their field notes.

The following are the steps for analysing data separately so that you can end up with two tables:

1. Read all the transcripts to get an overall idea.
2. Choose the shortest or the most interesting transcript, and read it.
3. Words and sentences are used as units of analysis. Re-read and underline spoken words and sentences of analysis on the transcript.
4. Then transfer the underlined spoken words and sentences to the left column as categories, while you write perceptions that come to your mind, to the right column.
5. Then read the transferred categories on the right hand side to identify the main

and sub-categories, as well as redundant categories.

6. The underlined spoken words are then transferred into a table indicating main, sub and further categories.
7. Then the table, when going through this again, you finalise your categories while looking at the spoken words and translating them into scientific language and also looking at whether you can refine your categorization.

I will appreciate it if you can suggest a date around the 10th, 14th or 15th August for our consensus discussion on data analysis. I would appreciate it if we can telephonically confirm the date.

Thanking you

.....
EVA MANYEDI
M.A. PSYCHIATRIC NURSING STUDENT

APPENDIX I

PART OF A TRANSCRIPTION OF AN INTERVIEW WITH A WIDOW

P : I mean missing him like talking about your domestic matters; maybe you want to do this and this or you want to go on holiday

R : Mh!

P : I mean now it is not wise for me being a woman to go on holiday alone!

R : With the child only, especially of her age, being too small it's going to be difficult; and then, is there anything else?

P : (Shook her head)

R : Ok, let us talk about the other people; you said that people seem to pity you. Maybe we need to talk at length about it because as an individual you need other people's support.

P : Ya, people pity you; in the first place a person might not have heard what happend so they'll be meeting me, say it's you coming to the bank. I am on duty and I have to serve you. You are not used to me dressing like this (meaning in mourning clothes).

R : Alright ...

P : (continues) So it's you there remarking Oh! It's you Mrs WG, and then?

R : So you are supposed to start relating ...

P : Can you see that; others it's shame someone else just start crying when they come to the bank Oh I pity you so you see such things! They hurt you.

R : They work on you ya; they take you back to that stage. I really understand that for people to react like that it is bases on your attire.

Let's talk about these clothes, how you feel about them; that is everything that you are dressed like this, how does it affect you.

R : Clothes for me had no effect on me; the only effect that they have now I did not know that they will have an effect on me when I put them on. No one tells me that when you are a widow and putting on black things they draw attention of the people ...

R : Alright!

P: (continues) but then it is my husband's culture that I must put them on. According to my Tswana culture at Taung we don't put on black things.

R: Mh! Ok you are from Taung?

P: Yes!

P: Ok!

P: So according to his culture it is a must; and according to that culture I'm supposed to wear them for a year but because my father is ill I'm going to put them on for only three months.

R: Then they will take you off them?

P: Yes.

R: So as you say I understand that ...

P: (Interrupted) Again they are binding because I mean you don't go anywhere, when you knock off you come straight home you can't ... they say you have got "bad luck" (sefifi). You don't go anywhere having this "bad luck". If it was during those times when women were not working, you are not even supposed to leave your home, staying home for the whole year. You don't go to the shops, you don't go anywhere. After a year then you are cleansed.

PART OF A TRANSCRIPTION OF AN INTERVIEW WITH A COMMUNITY MEMBER

P: The support she really got it from her family.

R: What did they really do when you say they supported her?

P: They supported her, they were the first to come when they heard about the death; the very same day they came. Even her sister who stays in Jo'burg she came that evenings; and then her family from Taung, as well as her younger sisters were around.

R: Mhh ...

P: Even is they came, the in-laws they found her family already here.

R: They were already here, alright; what else make you say that they were supporting her? Except that they came immediately, what else did they do?

P: They were contributing their monies to help where they saw a need;

R: Mhh! And then what more support did they give her?

- P : (Interrupted) they were warning her to be careful and not eat anything that she is given by anybody; and they said I would rather be the one preparing and giving her food, because I was always there. Mh! Yes ...
- R : (interrupted) The man's family become bitter;
- P : I wonder why its should be like that?
- R : Hei! (coughs) One never knows why, it is as if they think that their son has killed himself because of the wife; and then they just became funny, as if the wife's family will look down upon them, as if they are nothing.
- P : Ok, but then the funeral was run in his house but not at the wife's home like in this case.
- R : Like this very case the mother-in-law wanted the funeral to go to her place; she knows that she's going to benefit from condolences.