THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Digging Deep: Investigating Transcendent and Immanent Coping Strategies – Against Other Peoples Grief – in Crematoria and Cemetery Workers from the UK

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M A Religion: The Rhetoric and Rituals of Death

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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This independent study has been completed as a requirement for a higher degree of The University of Winchester

ABSTRACT

DIGGING DEEP: *INVESTIGATING TRANSCENDENT AND IMMANENT COPING STRATEGIES – AGAINST OTHER PEOPLES GRIEF – IN CREMATORIA AND CEMETERY WORKERS FROM THE UK.*

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This snapshot study, using an internet based questionnaire and field observation, shows that workers in Crematoria and Cemeteries in the United Kingdom use immanent and transcendent coping mechanisms while witnessing the repetitive grief of others and the trappings of death and funerals. Qualitative and quantitative data collected from the survey indicates that respondents use methods of coping in order to rise above death on a daily basis, which can be described in terms of Chidester's (1990) theory of spiritual transcendence and Clack's (2002) premise, that immanence, a worldly transcendence, may be gained by engaging with natural aspects of humanity. Respondents' experience is explored throughout this study in terms of 'working against death' suggestive of Davies' (2002) theory of 'words against death'. Particularly central to this thesis is the aspect of the survey data showing that many respondents stated that they used humour as a coping strategy while working against death. Humour is used as a theme which is further explored alongside other aspects of coping which relate to how respondents described working with and transcending death, insider teamwork and belonging within a physical and emotional landscape. Those who work alongside the dead are for the most-part invisible, and workers in Crematoria and cemeteries in the UK are no exception to this. Often unnoticed as a workforce they have not, up until now, been the subject of academic study. Consequentially, their survey responses shaped the direction of this study and act as a pointer to the opportunity for further in-depth research into particular coping mechanisms used by death workers, specifically relating to gallows humour, which could be undertaken in the future.

Acknowledgements:

With thanks to my family,
who gave me life and by dying
taught me not to fear Death...
and to Cath, who is very much alive!

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particularly Tim and Julie D at ICCM
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'Life fascinates me.
How is it that we make our lives meaningful, finding dignity and purpose? How do we cope with the pain and anguish of loss, and how do we discover pleasure and joy? The sociological response to these questions is to point to relationships, shared culture and social location. Life is found in relationships, real and imagined'.[1]

[1] Ezzy, D; 2002. *Qualitative analysis: Practice and Innovation.*
London: Routledge. p.xii.

CONTENTS

Introduction

This thesis is the final independent study for the qualification of MA: The Rhetoric and Rituals of Death from The University of Winchester. The study aims to show that a 'purposive sample' (Punch, 1998, p.193; Parahoo, 1997, p.232) of workers[2] in Crematoria and Cemeteries use coping mechanisms related to working with and witnessing the repetitive grief of others. The objective of the project is that by conducting a snapshot study, it has been possible to obtain rich data from respondents, via questionnaire, observation and interview, which reveals experiences of spiritual transcendence (Chidester, 1990, p.41) or immanence, a transcendent spirituality (Clack, 2002, p.5; Chidester, 1990, p.40), in the face of their death work. Resultant data is discussed alongside Davies' (2002, p.1), concept of 'words against death'. Additionally data has been explored through the work of academics from behaviour and humour studies, namely Goffman (1990), Berger (1997) and Critchley (2002), alongside Interpretation specialist Relph (1976).

Chapter One: *'Working Against Death'* explores data through the concept of Davies (2002) 'words against death', showing how respondents to the questionnaire encounter death and second hand grief in the workplace, where they think about death and what kind of funeral situations they find most difficult to work with. This chapter puts the workforce in context and sets the scene for the following chapters. Chapter Two: '*Searching for a Transcendence of Death'* looks at data showing how the respondents use coping methods against the experience of death and second hand grief, to rise above it and to achieve 'experiential transcendence' (Chidester, 1990, p.40) or immanence by achieving a 'this world spirituality' (Clack, 2002, p.9); the chapter introduces data about one specific area of coping – humour, which has both transcendent and immanent properties. This specific and important coping mechanism will be explored further in the following chapters. Chapter Three: '*Dressing for Effect'* concentrates on how being an insider on the work team at the crematorium might influence aspects of the data, in which uniform and professional detachment may be seen to be used by respondents, as a barrier against second hand grief, while they are working against death. Material gathered via the research survey was augmented through field study which purposely focussed on collecting data for this chapter. Structured interviews were conducted, which aimed to establish further qualitative data from the uniform specific questions in the survey (Appendix 1:3; Q:9; Q:10). Data will be considered using the work of Goffman, Davies, Clack and other theorists. Chapter Four: *'Maintaining a Spirit of Place'* looks at crematoria and cemeteries in interpretative terms of being metaphoric landscapes, as places where emotional reaction occurs and is imbued with a quality Relph

[2] Workers in the context of this study include Management; Administration staff; Chapel Attendants; Cremator operators; Grave Diggers/Ground-Staff; Clergy/Celebrants; Organists and others with peripheral roles within Crematoria and Cemeteries: Training Officer; Car-park attendant; Health and Safety Officer; Events Manager; Heritage/Cemetery Interpretation Consultant.

(1976) described as a 'spirit of place'. Survey data demonstrates that respondents try to maintain this spirit of place or sacredness (Davies 1996), on behalf of the mourners, in spite of their own personal emotional reactions to the events they witness when working against death. More than this, some respondents take experiences from work home with them in their internal emotional landscape. This contextual understanding of the special nature of the respondents' working landscape provides a platform for the discussion of data they submitted about experiencing tears and laughter at work. Furthermore, the perception of respondents belonging within their working landscape as a population of insiders supports the suggestion that humour can be viewed as a shared language of coping against witnessing second hand grief and the trappings of death. The notion of the landscape and language of humour is based on the work of Critchley (2002).

Project Development

Following inception, an initial pilot study (Appendix 1:2), was carried out at Cardiff Crematorium in November 2009. Feedback indicated that there were problems encouraging manual staff, with no work-time computer access, to participate. Following this, the questionnaire was refined slightly and consultation with Tim Morris, the Chief Executive Officer of the ICCM resulted in the project being expanded from a postal survey aimed at specific local crematoria, into a nationally available internet survey. The finalised questionnaire (Appendix 1:3), was set up using Survey Monkey and launched on the ICCM website and promoted on two other websites, namely the Good Funeral Guide (http://www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk/2009/12/christmas-quiz.html) and The Society of Crematorium Organists (http://www.societyofcrematoriumorganists.org.uk/), all three chosen to reach a wide range of respondents who worked within crematoria and cemeteries in the United Kingdom, those directly employed by cremation/burial authorities and those sub-contracted to provide specialist services to the bereaved. The survey was available from December 2009 to the end of February 2010.

Ethics

The project was designed within the University of Winchester's ethical guidelines (Appendix 1:1) and, in accordance to the 1998 Data protection Act, has at all times, maintained respondents' anonymity; no personal information was collected electronically and all respondents are referred to numerically within the study. Respondents approached during field study and interview were each given Information Sheets (Appendix 1:4a), about the study, and were asked to sign two Participant Consent forms (Appendix 1:4b), one copy to be retained by the researcher, one by the respondent. Respondents to the electronic survey were given the opportunity to download the Information and Consent documents in PDF form via the ICCM website.

Methodology

Methodologically, the research was a small 'snapshot' study that had a 'mixed approach' (Punch, 1998, p.256). The first level of data was collected by use of a questionnaire, designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Resulting quantitative data, predominantly nominal and ordinal, was analysed and is discussed descriptively within the text, alongside a selection of the qualitative comments that arose from the survey. Graphs of survey data are presented in the appendix. The qualitative data arising from the questions provided rich information; the space for additional comment allowed the individual respondents to express their feelings and experiences of working with second hand grief and death related issues in a way that would not have been possible in a purely quantitative survey. Further qualitative data was generated subsequently from limited observation on site at a selected crematorium and by 'structured interviews' (Punch, 1998, p.176; Bell, 1999, p.137), which expanded on the preliminary questionnaires' data. The crematorium and interview candidates were chosen purposively due to geographical location and in order to generate relevant data. This dissertation concentrates on specific aspects that arose from the respondents' comments, principally humour, which after it appears within the chapter two discussions, runs as a theme, linking the remaining chapters.

Although this snapshot study was by necessity, limited in the number of respondents, the study reached all the key categories of workers within the crematorium and cemetery industry which had not previously been held under academic scrutiny regarding coping mechanisms. Further, to ensure the study's credibility (Denscombe, 1998, p. 307; Polit; Beck & Hungler 2001, p. 315), the perspective and involvement of the researcher as a participant or bystander, (Goffman, 1963, p. 155; Schutz, 1962, p. 178), need to be addressed as the researcher is deeply connected to the subject matter. As a qualified embalmer, the author has been a funeral 'insider' for nineteen years and over this time has attended many funeral services at crematoria and cemeteries around the United Kingdom. Therefore, as a situated researcher (Tweed, 2002, p. 260), this academic research is dependent on personal death-work. Consequently it is located inside, outside and 'across' (Tweed, 2002, p. 270), the borders of personal experiential and academic knowledge. This connection had practical benefits in that it was easy to gain entry into the workplace as a fellow insider/researcher and this must be acknowledged as a starting point for the research. Furthermore, the intrapersonal subtleties that distinguished the relationships between workmates meant that this 'insider' also became an 'outsider' at cemeteries and crematoria. In some ways it was possible to cross the locative margins as described in Tweed's paper *'On Moving Across'* (2002), between visiting 'outsider' and knowledgeable 'insider'. Nevertheless as an 'insider', moving daily in and around crematoria and cemeteries, and with life experience of the deaths of family members and friends, this privileged prior knowledge and emotional investment helped ground the study. The study included aspects of

participant observation (Walter, 1994, p.203) and as Woodthorpe (2007, p.8-9), asserts, qualitative researchers need to acknowledge the extent of their emotional investment or reaction to their work, further that: 'What we need to consider is what insight into our informants' beliefs and experiences, and indeed our research question itself, can be developed from our emotional response to our data.' (Ibid). From this standpoint, the field visit was overwhelming and challenging. As a fellow 'insider' the potential of information detected about the extent of respondents' coping strategies while they were 'working against death 'and the subtle nuances that were observed personally, were colossal. This limited study can therefore only act as an introduction to the observations and as an inspiration for further research. As Ezzy (2002, pp. 148-149) says, 'Observing and writing are acts of selective attention. They represent experiences and action from the standpoint of the observer. Reports highlight some aspects of a phenomenon and suppress others'.

Chapter One: *Working Against Death.*

This chapter introduces the survey (Appendix: 1:3), designed to collect data from respondents about how they work with death, and to ascertain respondents' views on death in relation to witnessing second hand grief or experiencing emotion at work. Further, the chapter discusses if and where respondents think about death; how they feel when they witness grief in others and what kind of funeral they feel is the most difficult for them to work on. In addition, this chapter will touch on data that shows whether respondents feel prepared by work experience or previous coursework to deal with witnessing second hand grief, or would like further specific training on the subject in the future.

Douglas Davies (2002, p.1), coined the term 'Words against Death' as a description of how human beings use a wide range of ritual and rhetoric in the face of death to lessen the impact of its reality and therefore triumph over death. This labelling of the defensive activity against something shared and significant, Davies cautions, is a term of 'generalisation', but one that he hopes can be seen 'beyond the superficial' (Ibid, p.3). Survey results will be discussed using the term 'Working against Death', in a similar way to Davies' 'Words against Death', except for this study, the context of ritual and rhetoric of death and associated grief are situated within the workplace and workforce.

It is important to see the relationship that the respondents have with death in perspective. For mourners attending a funeral, their visit to a crematorium or cemetery[3] may be many things, for example, emotional, poignant or painful, and in some cases made all too brief by bureaucratic time constraint (Walter, 1994, p. 11). As Ariès (1976, p.106) says, '…death has become unnameable'. Dealing with the death of a loved one is something that is experienced by most people in the west infrequently; there is a distancing from the experience of personal death (Davies, 2002, p. 62). Walter (1994, p.45), further argues that for people living in a post-modern culture, even the impact of acknowledging the continued reality of death is difficult. However, in spite of Walter's (1994, p. 45), assertion that contemporary society is unable to assimilate death and that its acceptance is: '…an undermining of the basis of our culture, which is one of freedom from physical and natural constraint' (Walter, 1994, p. 11), the data in this chapter indicates that these respondents, who work with death on a daily basis, do consider death regularly. Furthermore, the respondents reported they think about death in connection with personal relationships, as well as within the more removed working relationship of the funeral, when confronted by the (usually) unknown deceased. In contrast to Ariès' (1981, p. 579), view of a contemporary norm of distancing from death, the data shows that the respondents have not only indicated that they think about death, but also that working with second hand grief may be understood in relation to their own lives, emotions and experiences. However, the

[3] A Cemetery in this context may be run by a cremation authority, be independent or as part of a Churchyard.

acceptance, comfort or distance of death may not always be seen to apply in the data when respondents discuss personal grief or loss that they have already experienced or which they anticipate in the future.

Academic death distinctions such as 'modern' or 'traditional' (Walter, 1994, p.48), allow the information under scrutiny to be placed into historical as well as social context, from which point the content may be compared and contrasted; thus giving a manageable structure and a framework to what is inevitably a variable subject. However, as Walter (1994, p.47), carefully points out, this format does not represent what actually happens in reality, but provides readers with a simplified and logical method through which the inevitable complexities and variables of reality may be studied. Furthermore, he states that he has not provided this tool in isolation; his work follows that done by Ariès (1976), and Williams (1990), both of whom used differing forms of 'ideal type' in their own attempts to add to the study of death (Walter, 1994 p.60).

Data Review

Initial questions in the survey (Appendix 1:3),[4] asked for information relating to the respondent's job title or role, and further questions were designed specifically to bring in data about how respondents dealt with, or thought about death, when in this role. Subsequent questions asked how respondents coped after emotionally difficult funerals, how and where they took time out in-between funerals, if they had particular religious beliefs and if they thought these helped them come to terms with their own eventual death, or other people's death. Other questions were designed to find out whether respondents considered that they had received adequate training or work experience to cope with second hand grief.

Sixty five people responded online; sixty completed the survey fully giving a response total of 92.3%, with slightly more of the replies coming from men 58.5% (38)[5] than women 41.5% (27). The responses came from a wide range of workers (Appendix 2; Q:1) whose job descriptions covered the gamut of roles within Crematoria and Cemeteries. This population spread included both full time staff and those brought in, on behalf of the mourners, to provide specialist services – such as Organists and Ritualists (clergy and non religious celebrants). Therefore, the data covered the breadth of experience

[4] Q=Question number and Graph relating to that Question;
R=Questionnaire Respondent number; F=Field visit respondent number.

[5] The first figure is the result of the question shown as a percentage; the number in brackets is the total number of respondents who answered that question.

within the Crematoria and Cemetery industry, providing a relevant snapshot of whether, and how, death workers cope with second-hand grief.

The data showed overall, that there was a propensity for long service within this varied workforce. Only twenty one respondents said they had been working in Crematoria and Cemeteries between one and five years (Appendix 2; Q:2); compared to the combined numbers of the remaining categories - those of respondents working from five to ten years; ten to fifteen years; fifteen to twenty years and over twenty years. Further to this, a high proportion of the respondents 70.8% (46) said that they had a job specific qualification (Appendix 2; Q:3). Most of those who chose to specify, said that their qualification was gained through the Institute of Crematorium and Cemetery Managers (ICCM). Other qualifications mentioned were Crematoria and Cemetery specific, such as those gained via CTTS (Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme), or through the City & Guilds National Proficiency Tests Council (NPTC) scheme. These qualifications may be predominantly practical, rather than ritual or rhetoric based, however, the context of 'Working against Death' and connection with funerals provides the opportunity for workers of all kinds at a Crematorium or Cemetery to witness grief in others at some point in a working day. The level of qualification throughout the respondent population indicated that they were not only skilled practitioners in whatever role they fulfilled, but could in addition, be seen to have made a significant commitment to their work within the Crematorium or Cemetery setting or on behalf of mourners.

The question: '*Does your job entail attending funerals?'*(Appendix 2; Q:4), revealed that a high percentage, 72.3% (47), of respondents did attend. The high level of positive response to this question strengthens the data gained from later questions about emotional response and coping, because the funeral service is the key ritual event in which second hand grief would be encountered. Question 5 (Appendix 2; Q:5), asked in what capacity the respondents usually attended funerals; the highest answer being 32.8% (21), *'Attend the whole service';* with 12.5% (8), *'Attend*[ing] *the graveside only';* 25.0% (16) saying that *'It varies'*. One person '*Attend[ed] the procession only'* and for 29.7% (19) respondents it was *'Not applicable'.* Further questioning revealed which secondary roles respondents commonly performed, aside from attending funerals (Appendix 2; Q:6). Interestingly, whilst less than half the respondents 31.3% (20) said that they *'scattered cremated remains'* and 23.4% (15) *'sat at the reception desk'*, both of these positions would necessitate coming into contact with mourners and potentially would include further exposure to second hand grief or difficult emotions.

These three questions about levels of funeral or ritual attendance were important to ascertain if the respondents were witnessing the emotional content of the entire funeral service, or alternatively,

taking part in a section of the ritual, such as the procession into the crematorium chapel, the graveside interment at a burial, sitting at the reception desk, or the scattering cremated remains after the funeral service and subsequent cremation. Any of these situations might provide instances in which respondents could feel an emotional reaction through witnessing second hand grief. Had the majority of respondents not attended the funeral service or any part of the ritual, the level of second hand grief and emotion experienced would have been reduced significantly and responses to the later questions specifically designed to ask about coping with grief would been weakened. Conversely, the fact that a proportion of the workers were exposed further to second hand grief through their secondary roles added rigor to the data.

A further question '*Does your job entail contact with mourners?'* (Appendix 2; Q:8), was designed to strengthen the validity of the data gained later in the questionnaire. In reply, 87.7% (57) said that they did have contact with mourners. In order to account for the high '*yes'* result, several categories of workers, who would not necessarily attend the funeral services regularly, but nevertheless, had contact with mourners needed to be taken into consideration. These included Administration staff, Management staff (of all levels) and Grave Diggers. Some Administration and Management staff said that they attended funerals on occasion, but usually met mourners when they visited the office to request details about memorials; to add the details of the deceased to the book of remembrance; or to seek other sundry services offered by the cemetery or crematorium. Administrative contact with mourners varied, from face to face or telephone conversations, which might include the direct experience of witnessing second hand grief, to email contact which might be seen as having potentially less impact. Overall, respondents reported different modes of contacts with mourners, according to the types of jobs or role that they had within the workplace. Some of these interactions were predominantly single business conversations, for example mourners contacting Administration staff, or Organists, whereas other meetings, in contrast, were extended and took place over several hours or days, in the case of Celebrants/Clergy or Funeral Directors. How respondents overcame the emotional intensity or level of grief witnessed through these different forms of contact will be discussed in Chapter Two: '*Searching for a Transcendence of Death'.*

Having established that a large percentage of respondents did have contact with mourners and attended funerals, it is pertinent to analyse the data received about whether respondents said that they thought about death and if so, where they thought about death. Respondents were asked*, 'Do you find yourself thinking about death?'* (Appendix 2; Q:13). Whilst it is clear that the majority of respondents had contact with mourners, a smaller percentage 69.4% (43), had thoughts about death; this response was broken down into choices of '*very often'; 'quite often'* and *'often'*. The most frequently indicated option: '*quite often'* 34.9% (22) demonstrated that thinking about death was a significant

phenomenon. In contrast to this 19.0% (12) respondents chose the '*not very often'* option and no respondents chose the option '*never*'. Two respondents skipped the question.

Having established that most death workers studied thought about death frequently, the next question was designed to find out where these thoughts occurred. Were the thoughts occurring only at work, or did some of the respondent's carry the thought of death and the memory of having witnessed second hand grief home with them. If data indicated that respondents were thinking about death outside working hours, it would strengthen the argument that they had to work against death and also the respondents' need for finding individual coping mechanisms, either as a way to transcend or incorporate these experiences.

The question (Appendix 2; Q:14); *'If you think about death: Do you think about it mostly'* gave the respondents situated choices to indicate where they experienced thoughts about death most frequently. Data gathered showed that although most respondents found that they thought about death '*at work*' 50.8% (32), and some specifically thought about it '*during the funeral that they were attending'* 31.7% (20), several respondents said that they thought about death '*at home*' 31.7% (20). One person [R:55], chose the '*not applicable*' option, as they saw their role as a Health and Safety Officer as peripheral and not directly involved in attending funerals. These results suggest that for a third of respondents, thoughts about death were not ones that they could just leave at the crematorium or cemetery gates when they left work at the end of the day. Importantly for this study, they 'Work against Death' and also live with the results of it.

The '*other*' 22.2% (14), category, included several respondents who elaborated about this providing qualitative data. Some of these respondents said that they thought about death: *'Anywhere – most of the time'* [R:46]; and that: *'It is always there in the background'* [R: 14]. They thought about death: *'At work and home'* [R:23]; saying that: *'There are harrowing circumstances…that can remain with me after work'* [R:24]. Other responses indicated that thoughts of death were there, not as a negative thing, but perceived as useful as they gave an added perspective to life. For example : '*It is always there…bound to be…Working with death certainly makes me think about life and death – more deeply'* [R:61]; and secondly: *'It is always in the back of my mind, but I don't dwell on it'* [R:59]. Further to this, the data substantiated an ongoing engagement that respondents had with thoughts about death, demonstrating a depth of introspection about living and working, as well as dying.

One respondent indicated these aspects by saying that:

> [I think about death] *At no specific or predictable times. I enjoy thinking about death because of the perspectives it gives on life, and because it helps me understand what's needed of me to support the bereaved* [R:4].

Following on from this, the next question explored this phenomenon further and asked respondents to select several choices from categories of terms demonstrating ways in which they thought about death (Appendix 2; Q:15). These were in relation to:
1. the *'deceased at the funeral'*; 2. *'their own mortality'*; 3. that of *'someone close'* to them; additionally, if they thought of death in terms of being: 4. a *'positive thing'* or 5. a *'negative thing'*. Data gathered on thinking about death in relational terms, showed that 69.8% (44) of respondents said that they only thought about death in terms of the *'deceased at the funeral'*. This indicated that while being confronted by the deceased person's death during the funeral rhetoric and ritual, there is a concentration of thought around the death of a stranger, or as Ariès (1976, p. 56) termed it, the 'death of another'. However, the results also indicated that respondents thought about their *'own mortality'* 65.1% (41); and *'that of someone close'* 61.9% (39). Additionally, when asked, 38.1% (24) of respondents said that they thought of death as *'a positive thing',* as opposed to 15.9% (10) who thought of it as *'a negative thing'*. Further to this, the qualitative answers regarding in what 'terms' death was thought about, were explained in a number of ways within the comments section. These comments indicate the depth of thought and the profound way in which death enters into the very core of these workers. Ten respondents, who chose to expand, spoke of thinking about the inevitability and importance of death; one suggested:

> *I think about death around all situations, not just those involving an actual death. That we shall die is a fact; how and when may be irrelevant, for now, but the truth of all our deaths defines who we are and the purposes to which we put our irreplaceable lives* [R:4].

Another respondent said that:

> *I do think of the deceased more so when they are young and how they died. I also think of death with regards to someone close i.e. family. But for myself I think of death as an inevitability and realise "when the time comes" It* [sic] *comes* [R:50].

Some respondents spoke about negative aspects: *'How sad and upsetting it can be'* [R:43]; *'…A catastrophe, often, but one that we must prepare ourselves for'* [R:3]. A further respondent wondered how they would cope if they lost somebody close to them. This sentiment was echoed by another more tentative response: *'…It makes me wonder how I would cope under similar circumstances'* [R:16]. Working with death has clearly given the workforce an opportunity to consider death as part of life, unusual in a modern society in which the realities of death are somewhat obscured (Davies,

2002, p.155). However, the way in which these respondents think about death in personal terms, seems to correlate directly with Walter's (1994, p.64) 'neo-modern' attitude, in which there is more open expression of feelings, even though the experience they have of dealing with death on a regular basis makes their work more akin to that of living in an era of traditional and therefore exposed incidences of death.

In order to understand respondents more directly, the next question asked which type of funeral most respondents found the *'most difficult to work on or to attend'*. (Appendix 2; Q:16). The category choices were broken down into the deceased person's age range and space was given for additional qualitative data collection. The highest numerical response was 34.9% (22), for funeral of a *'child'*, although the number of respondents choosing categories of *'young person'* and *'baby/infant'* also showed that they were seen as difficult funerals. Therefore, the combined responses made funerals of all categories of young people the ones that respondents found the most difficult. These deaths are considered untimely in modern British society and are as such particularly traumatic as they challenge societal expectations of what is considered as the normal lifespan (Davies, 2002, p. 55; Payne; Horn and Relf, 1999, pp.56-57).

However, the second individual category deemed *'most difficult'* was *'all of them'*, indicating that for 20.6% (13) of respondents, the age of the deceased was not the singular criteria of difficulty. Was it that for these respondents, death was just difficult generally? Conversely, the circumstance of death was pointed out by several respondents as being an important factor of 'difficulty'. For example, one respondent said: *'Let's not overlook suicide – they're pretty darn hard'* [R:3], another *'...Not generalised to old…just lonely deaths are most difficult.'* [R:63]. The age of the deceased compared to the respondents own, or circumstances that mirrored the respondent's family were also seen to be criterion of difficulty. One respondent said it made them ask questions: *'especially when a young family is left behind. How would I feel? What would I do? Are questions that come to mind'* [R:24]. Another said:*'...I have my own children and relate to the emotions that the parents may be feeling'* [R:62]. There were also indications of acceptance and working with death as part of the cycle of life; a respondent wrote:

> *It is all relative as there are different emotions and feelings associated with each* [funeral]. *For me death is part of the cycle of life and inevitably the older you become the more aware you become of your own limitations and time remaining. It's entirely natural and healthy* [R:64].

Another difficulty expressed was the level of emotion or numbers of mourners generated by the death and ritual: *'...The huge number of mourners at the funeral of a young adult probably makes that the most difficult for me'* [R:27]. Whilst respondents indicated that although funerals of children were

seen as being the most difficult overall, it is clear that each and every funeral and death that they had to work on was a challenge and therefore brought a different set of circumstances thoughts or emotions for them to work with, triumph over or work against on a regular basis. Signifying the extent to which respondents needed to use words against death, or to work against death; no single death was regarded as easy, insignificant – or run of the mill. Davies (2002, p. 5), speaks of grief as a 'rupturing of relationships' and also of being a form of self-reflection that enables people to look at human life. The data from this question indicated that the respondents, although challenged by working on difficult funerals, were 'working against death' actively, using self-reflection and self awareness; they were used to death in a way indicated by Walter's (1994, p.51) traditional type. However, for some respondents, all deaths were considered bad deaths. Hence, the use of Walter's sociological categorisation is also limited when exploring a small group of people rather than society at large, as it does not include individual responses which may show crossings between Walter's three types of death (1994, p.48).

With the generated data having established that the majority of respondents were in contact with grieving mourners and that they thought deeply about death, given that results were not known prior to designing the survey, the next question (Appendix 2; Q:17), sought to ask respondents directly *'If you witness grieving mourners, how does it make you feel?'* and gave a scale of response to six specified emotional reactions. Respondents were asked to pick one level for each emotional reaction. The respondents' level of agreement; their neutrality or disagreement with the emotions they experience when witnessing grieving mourners are discussed as follows:

1. *'Sad for them'* - Highest response: *'agree'* 48.3% (29). The other main levels chosen for this response were: *'strongly agree'* 31.7% (19) and *'neutral'* 15.0% (9). Two respondents chose the '*disagree*' option and one, *'don't know'*. Although there was a level of neutrality expressed, the highest percentage of respondents agreed that they felt sad for the grieving mourners they encountered during work. This result indicates that the grief being expressed by mourners is being recognised and responded to in an emotional way by the majority of respondents, rather than being completely disregarded or negated. As such, it is suggested that if respondents see second hand grief and feel sad for the bereaved, then they are necessitating a requirement to 'work against death' and grief, or transcend it in some way, in order to cope with seeing it daily. However, although respondents said that they felt sad, this may not indicate necessarily that a personal emotional connection has been made, more that an immediate emotional reaction has been experienced.

2. *'Uncomfortable'* – Highest response: *'neutral'* 30.9% (17). Although *'neutral'* was the most selected emotional reaction to witnessing grief, the next two most popular categories: '*strongly*

disagree' 27.3% (15); and *'disagree'* 21.8% (12) indicate that despite Freud's 1919 theory, in which he suggested that any aspect of death might be considered as uncanny, due to our unconscious mind not being able to accept our mortality (Freud, 2003, p.148), these workers feel comfortable with death related grief, or neutral towards it. They may well respond with sympathy as was seen in the *'sad for them'* category, however, respondents do not give the impression at this point in the data of experiencing an extraordinary emotional reaction in the face of death, which in turn, could indicate a level of acceptance or habituation.

3. *'It's not my grief'* - Highest response: *'neutral'* 35.1% (20). In addition to those workers who felt neutral towards the grief witnessed, 31.6% (18) of respondents felt that it was not their grief, a factor, which might serve to allow them to focus on work, even if they also felt sympathy for the mourners. However, by contrast, 19.3% (11) of respondents disagreed, and stated that they felt that in fact it was their grief. A further, 10.5% (6) respondents said that they strongly disagreed. This ownership of the second hand grief further suggests and reinforces the hypotheses that a number of the respondents have a level of personal emotional engagement to the grief of mourners through their work. There is a far stronger response here than elsewhere since respondents indicate a high level of empathy.

4. *'It reminds me of my own experiences of mourning'* – Highest response: *'agree'* 40.4% (23). The second highest response to this emotional reaction on witnessing grief was: '*neutral'* 31.6% (18); followed by 15.8% (9) of respondents who '*disagree'*. This data confirms that there are a number of respondents who relate to witnessing second hand grief during working hours, with their own life or family experiences, whereas others remain neutral or distance themselves. Of the (11) respondents who said that they were not reminded of personal experiences of mourning, (6) were in the age range of 50-65 and (5) were in the age range of 30-50; these age ranges might indicate that personal mourning could have been experienced, however, the question of individual experience of grief was not explored in the survey. Nonetheless, (9) of these respondents who were not reminded of their own experiences said that they felt sad when they witnessed grieving mourners, indicating for these respondents that there was not a link necessarily between being reminded of personal loss and feeling empathy for grief in others.

5. *'Detached'* – Highest response: *'disagree'* 35.1% (20), followed by '*neutral'* 28.1% (16), *'agree'* 21.1% (12) and *'strongly disagree'*10.5% (6). Interestingly, a further, 3.5% (3) of respondents '*strongly agreed'* that they felt detached. Here the data indicates that there is a higher level of engagement rather than withdrawal or detachment from the second hand grief. However, the study's qualitative comments also revealed that respondents were using detachment and the act of distancing themselves as coping mechanisms in the face of grief, death and mourning. (These issues will be

discussed further in Chapter Two: *'Searching for a Transcendence of Death'* and in Chapter Three *'Dressing for Effect'*).

6. *Happy with my own situation in life'* – Highest response: *'neutral'* 44.6% (25). The second highest choice was '*agree'* 33.9% (19) with *'strongly agree'* 5.4% (3) rating much lower. Respondents who selected '*disagree'* 8.9% (5), and *'strongly disagree'* 3.6% (2) were significantly lower than *'neutral'* and *'agree'* This data suggests that although respondents react on an emotional level when they witness second hand grief, they are not necessarily overcome by it. They appear to manage to find a transcendent mechanism to help them either feel comfortable with life, or in order to remain neutral in the face of death, transcend the grief by 'working against death'.

The material gathered in questions 4, 5, 6, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17, indicated that respondents were experiencing second hand grief. To further explore this aspect, questions subsequently probed respondents about whether they felt that they had been specifically trained to cope with witnessing grief. Answers (Appendix 2; Q:28), revealed that 70.0% (42) said *'yes'* their training and experience had equipped them to deal with observing other people's grief, whilst another 18.3% (11) answered *'no'* and 11.7% (7) of others were *'unsure'*. In spite of most respondents feeling that they had been trained and were equipped to deal with second hand grief, when asked if *'...some form of training on death related grief would be beneficial...*' (Appendix 2; Q:29) the majority response was *'yes'* 66.7% (40) with 18.3% (11) *'no'* and 15.0% (9) *'not applicable'*. Clearly respondents felt that additional or ongoing training would be helpful. Question 30, presented several training format options (Appendix 2; Q:30) which, apart from the lower result for correspondence/distance learning, gained reasonably even responses. It is obvious that there is a need for both the crematoria and death education sectors to provide future opportunities for courses and beneficial support on coping with second hand grief for this sector of death workers. These results may be fed back to the ICCM who have shown interest and given this project support.

Conclusion

Exploration of the survey data in this chapter has given a context to the respondents as a workforce in relation to their role within crematoria and cemeteries. Furthermore, the data demonstrates the kind of contact respondents have with mourners and funeral ritual and how through those experiences many respondents report having had thoughts of death, that occur both in the workplace and after work. In addition, respondents submitted data that indicated they had experienced emotional responses or reactions to particular occurrences of witnessed grief. Consequently, the data gleaned from the survey has indicated that there is a need for respondents to be 'working against death', not just against it, but

against it daily. Hence, to do their work in a sensitive empathetic way, respondents seem to accept death as a familiar occurrence but are also moved by the grief or circumstances of others. However, although data indicates that thoughts of death and second hand grief are familiar for many respondents, as Ariès (1976, p.105), purports, the ability to acknowledge death as a comfortable reality, due to familiarization with it through work, would seem to be unusual in modern society. However, respondents' behaviour and feelings would concur with Walter's (1994, p, 48) ideal view of a more traditional, accepting attitude to death.

Having found that the data shows that most respondents are working against death and reacting emotionally to witnessing second hand grief during their working day, Chapter Two takes the discussion further to address the methods that respondents use as a means of transcending or rising above the impact of death.

Chapter Two: *Searching for a Transcendence of Death.*

Expanding the concept of 'working against death', this chapter addresses data that illustrates that the population being studied use both transcendent and immanent coping mechanisms in order to recover from working with death. In particular, the chapter will examine survey responses which articulate either of two methods of transcendent or immanent coping, the first being humour, specifically 'gallows' or dark humour; and secondly, religious/spiritual belief. Visible in the data, these techniques of 'going beyond' the reality of working with death and grief daily will be examined using the work of theorists, principally, David Chidester (1990, p.40), who defines religious transcendence as the result of 'rising above or going beyond' that of reality. In addition, he describes 'experiential transcendence', an experience that might be encountered through incorporating death into life, an action which he maintains helps the person to rise above death, or go beyond it. Pertinently, Chidester (1990, p. 3), further suggests that rhetoric and rituals of death are a contributing factor in defining a society. He suggests that 'perhaps in that confrontation with death, human beings are most human, both in their limitations and in their potential for transcendence'. These concepts of experiential transcendence and confronting death, when used in terms of 'Working against Death', echo the understandings of Beverly Clack (2002). Clack (2002, pp.8-9), speaks of engaging completely in being human and reaching a non-religious immanence through experiencing a 'this-world' spirituality'; an immanence through immersion with the realities of life and death. In respect to these two scholars, it is argued that it is possible to rise above death, to transcend it by using this very immanence, to engage with death within the breadth of human emotion and experience. This premise will be furthered argued in the following chapters.

Given the nature of the information received from the survey, the data will be discussed in terms of Berger's (1997), theory on the transcendent effect of 'Redeeming Laughter' and Freud's (1928), concept of 'gallows humour' in which he discusses the phenomena of dark humour being found as a coping mechanism for people who are in situations which are difficult and in which there is little or no control. The recourse to humour and having a sense of humour can be understood as having a transcendent aspect (Berger, 1997, p. 205), that helps to 'moderate the intensity of negative life events' (DeSpelder & Strickland, 2002, p.16). This argument suggests an immanent quality, an engagement with the realities of difficulty and a transcendent curative aspect of being able to distance oneself and or rise beyond the situation, thus re-bonding the individual with colleagues. Such use of dark humour is also found in other professionals who work with the dead, damaged or dying:

> Individuals who care for the dying or encounter death on in their jobs, as, for example, emergency services personnel, use humor to distance themselves from the horror as well as rebond after traumatic incidents (Ibid).

Further discussion about the importance of teamwork, insider/outsider distancing and the situated nature of humour will be addressed in later chapters.

Data Review

Having discussed previously what kind of funerals respondents found most difficult and how they felt when they witnessed grieving mourners, subsequent survey questions delved into how they coped after a difficult funeral; how they spent 'downtime at work' and who they 'offloaded' to. Further questions were asked about the respondent's personal beliefs and religious pathways, ascertaining whether they considered that these beliefs helped them to come to terms with the deaths of others and with their own deaths.

Respondents were asked if there was specific time given to them as a break between funerals (Appendix 3; Q: 18). The highest response was *'yes'* 54.0% (34); 7.9% (5) said *'no'* and 38.7% (24) chose *'other'*, which gave rise to comments. One Superintendent said: *'We always allow at least 30 minutes between funerals for our staff'* [R:44], while another Crematorium and Cemeteries Manager spoke of having had a contrasting experience in the past: *'I don't attend them now - but previously as chapel attendant, did 17 funerals a day. The mess-room was very unhealthy - had no windows. I used to go home shattered. (That was somewhere else, not the place I manage now)'* [R:61]. Celebrants and Clergy indicated that they seldom conducted more than one funeral a day [R:24; R:12; R:3]. A Crematorium Technician said: '*On an average day there are no breaks between services. However there are days when the services are spread out and there are breaks.'* [R56]. This data indicated that breaks were not only considered valuable, but also that the quality of time out was physically and emotionally relevant to the individual's well being.

A subsequent survey question addressed the locations in which respondents found coping methods through spiritual, experiential or social levels of transcendence or immanence. In the data, these places vary; responses described the coping location as situated solely or partly in the workplace. Others experienced it individually or socially between family members or other death workers. In contrast and as a sign of the times, some respondents achieved a level of coping through cyberspace. Respondents who took 'time out' chose an area of the workplace best representing where they spent their breaks between funerals (Appendix 3; Q:19). Interestingly, only 14.3% (9), chose: *'in the staff room'*; the highest specified response was: *'in the office'* 39.7% (25). This choice might indicate that for some respondents, the office represents a space in which social interaction could be shared, but for others it may be a space to withdraw and spend time alone. Two results indicated that outdoors, the preferred option being '*in the grounds'* 23.8% (15), was chosen jointly with *'in the cemetery'* 23.8%

(15). This may indicate a need to get away from it all and enjoy nature or fresh air, even if limited to the area surrounding the workplace. In contrast to this 9.5% (6) respondents, said that breaks were spent *'in the cremator room'*, which, being a restricted area would be private to all but key staff. Additionally, 44.4% (28) respondents chose *'other'* and described taking breaks: *'in the car'* [R:1; R:43; R:16]; *'offsite'* or *'in a cafe'* [R:3; R:16;]; some indicated that there were no specific places to go in between funerals [R:23;R:39]. This data indicated overall, that the respondents were indeed needing and having time out in between funerals at various locations, both on and off-site and in a mixture of potential social or lone environments. The inconclusive results make it difficult to assert which is the most effective location for coping, nonetheless the variety of localities reflect the personal nature of an individual's coping strategy. Future research may need to be more specific.

Respondents were then asked a multi option question (Appendix 3; Q: 20), about who they talked to or 'offloaded' with about work. This question incorporated various categories and a space to include qualitative comments. Most respondents said that they talked to *'work colleagues'* 74.6% (47), followed by those who talked to *'family'*57.1% (36). The other highest categories of choice were *'other death workers'* 47.6% (30) and *'friends'* 31.7% (20). In contrast to these responses which denoted that some form of social face to face interaction, two further categories revealed that some respondents *'never talk about work'* 7.9% (5), while others *'chat on the internet'* 6.3% (4). It appears that although respondents predominantly chose familiar people who would understand about the subject matter under discussion they also chose to talk and offload to family and friends, who it may be posited, could provide face to face emotional support if necessary, even if they were not intimate with death work. Alternatively, a small number of respondents did not feel the need to discuss work at all, but the study cannot conclude whether this stems from a sense of professionalism or a desire for personal privacy. Qualitative comments in relation to this question provided some interesting data, especially about internet use. As one senior manager said:

> *I never use internet chat lines to talk about my work as I view the service we provide as sensitive and deeply personal to our bereaved. I regard using the internet for this purpose as a morally bankrupt act. You just have to be wise enough to know when not to talk about work as it has the potential to cause significant upset to those not associated with the industry and who therefore do not have the same sort of professional detachment* [Q20; R:64].

Other respondents also indicated that they did not feel that work could be discussed openly with everyone saying: *'You need to be careful who you talk to'* [Q20;R:63]; and: *'Only friends who understand....you have to be a bit careful! Not everyone is a suitable person to discuss work with'* [Q20;R:61]. However, one respondent felt that there was often a general interest in death related work: *'People are fascinated by what we do so talking about it is normal'* [Q20; R:23]. Another

added that even if they did not talk openly, it could still be a necessary option: [I]*'Rarely discuss*[work]*, but do feel we need some form of support sometimes'* [Q20;R:54]. It is evident that respondents were aware of the sensitivity and unusual nature of their work and found appropriate ways in which to offload and discuss it that fitted their individual needs and lifestyles. This could also suggest a general absence of support provided officially by industry employers.

Taking this issue of 'off loading' a step further, the respondents were asked: *'What in particular helps you to cope after a difficult funeral?'* (Appendix 3; Q:21). To gain a rich insight into areas of coping mechanisms, considered to include both immanent and transcendent facets, respondents were able to answer multiple options and offer, qualitative comment. *'gallows humour'* 39.7% (25) featured as the highest rated method of coping after a difficult funeral; followed closely by *'chat about nothing in particular with colleagues'* 36.5% (23) and *'have a joke and a laugh'* 28.6% (18). These three top answers all showed choices that involved communication and potential for sharing with other people in a relaxed, loose environment, one with no mourners or managers present, who could be termed 'guardians' of 'order' (Goffman1963, p.210). Respondents, who also added qualitative comments, illustrated that they were aware of how and why they used humour, and its importance as a coping mechanism against death. Moreover, they were conscious of where and when it was appropriate to use this kind of humour, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of its sensitivity to 'outsiders'. Gallows humour and social interaction involving relaxed chatting and joking, featured when respondents were with like minded others, who were able to *'take each other into account'* [sic] (Blumer, 1969, p.108). Being aware of the situation and the likely reception to or understanding of the joke was important, but the need for gallows humour was crucial. As one respondent said:

> *there's a lot to be said for gallows humour, sometimes, without it, it would be all too easy to fall apart - which would not help anyone or the situation, but you have to be careful how you 'use' it - many would find it offensive* [Q21; R15].

Another respondent said: *'Gallows humour is so important - it is a sort of release.....helps me cope.'* [Q21; R:61]. A further respondent emphasised just how important humour and the time of debriefing with colleagues were after a difficult funeral:

> *I debrief with other celebrants to ground myself and reconnect with the day to day world. Sometimes dark humour helps to dissipate the feeling of powerlessness in the face of the inevitable* [Q21; R:8].

The use of gallows humour as a coping method while 'working against death' not only acted to help respondents rise above and against the inevitability of death, but acted as a release of emotional tension; for one respondent, humour was described as an enjoyable release and not aimed harmfully at

any individual: '*Dark humour is something that I have always enjoyed.....not at anyone in particulars expense, but just a relief of tension.'* [Q21; R:62].

Blumer (1969, p.115), suggests that instances where human association is heavily ritualized, where each individual's actions are prescribed and where role playing 'approximates perfection', are infrequent. Nevertheless, for these respondents they are the norm. Working with death often involves acting. Playing a part daily in exacting and stylised ritual involves not only the funeral ritual itself, but additional heavily prescribed behaviours, and a stance and body-language when in contact with mourners or when working with the remains of the deceased. Prescribed behaviour in relation to teamwork and professional distancing will be discussed further in Chapter Three: *'Dressing for Effect'*. Respondents to this study have shown to be insiders in an unusual working environment that not only exposes them to the emotional extremes of human mortality, but one that also generates behavioural boundaries and expectations as to how death workers should react to the rarefied sentiment around them. However, although the survey data show clear evidence that some respondents have to strive actively to cope with 'working against death' after being affected by difficult funerals, the study has provided some evidence that senior administrative managers of crematoria and cemeteries, who do not attend funerals, might simply expect workers to be able to distance themselves from working with death. For example:

> *We all know that there are certain occupations that carry with them negative perceptions and are difficult for those outside to come to terms with...The whole point about these types of occupations is the degree of professional detatchment* [sic] *that a practitioner has to develop to cope with the emotional content* [Q21; R64].

Conversely, some crematorium and cemetery managers who attend funerals showed awareness of the need to cope in a different way, acknowledging the emotional reaction, finding ways to work through it – with humour and by emphasising the positive effect of having done a good job (an aspect that will be further explored in Chapter Three: *'Dressing for Effect'*):

> *I think humour is the best way of coping. Although some funerals can affect me during the service, I generally feel better by the end as long as everything has gone well - pride in a job well done. If something goes wrong, I will be annoyed for professional reasons rather than upset because of the funeral* [Q21; R36].

The apparent difference between the attitudes and expectations of some senior administration staff and those who also attended funeral services would need further investigation to demonstrate that there is a difference. Overall, responses about methods of coping after a difficult funeral, involving humour in personal interactions, indicate that respondents engage immanently with the realities of death, but show a sensitivity and understanding of where and when it is appropriate to use humour to rise above or transcend it.

In order to confirm the possible use of gallows humour as a coping mechanism, the survey asked the question: *Do the following feelings apply for you regularly?* (Appendix 3; Q:24). Over half of the (65) respondents 57.1% (36), said that they enjoyed the use of gallows humour regularly. However, without further study, it may not be possible to state exactly how respondents use gallows humour as a method of transcendence – or additionally, as it enables them to jokingly engage with the horrid, painful, realities of grief and death directly – achieving immanence against death. The important use of gallows or dark humour by death workers for coping and rising above the daily reality of witnessing second hand grief and death ritual is amplified by Freud (1928, p.2), who saw gallows humour as uplifting, somehow preventing the need to expend feeling that would be usually required by pain. Breton, (1997, p. *xviii)*, quotes Freud: "Without quite knowing why, we attribute to this less intensive pleasure a high value: we feel it to have a peculiarly liberating and elevating effect".
As such, gallows humour in particular, fits in with both transcendent and immanent aspects of coping. While not being religious in its transcendent effect, gallows humour can fulfil potentially the criteria of Chidester's (1990, p.40), 'experiential transcendence'. Workers in crematoria and cemeteries, incorporate death into their lives, by thinking about it and by experiencing it while working daily. Essentially by fully immersing in death, they engage with immanence and also experience an uplifting transcendence of death. Immersion in death in this instance, is an action which Chidester (1990, p.40) asserts helps the person to rise above death, or go beyond 'painful realities' and as Berger (1997, p.210) says, to 'neutralize' them. Berger further suggests that this transcending aspect of humour has redeeming qualities that are not temporary. They give the performer or recipient of the humour a lasting transformative experience, a feature parallel to that of religious transcendence (1997, p.205).

Taking this argument further, gallows humour and '*having a joke and a laugh'* were shown in the survey data to be used by a wide range of respondents; those who said that they enjoyed work, as well as those who did not enjoy it. Moreover gallows humour, rather than just *'having a joke and a laugh'* was selected by people who enjoyed work and others who did not. As such, humour could be argued to be a flexible and important coping mechanism, one that not only acts to transcend the presence of death and its trappings, by literally blowing it away by the power of the joke, but also acting to rise above the rigours and prescription of working with grieving mourners, around whom respondents would need to act and appear professional. Survey responses about recourse to the curative powers of laughter against death and the wide use of gallows humour as a coping mechanism show a deep contrast between the usually sombre performative ritual at the public funeral, where participants have to 'restrain' or 'inhibit' personal inclinations and tendencies (Blumer, 1969, p.111), and the coping mechanisms resorted to in private areas back-stage, or at home. Death is transcended away from the performance of work, in the re-telling of a mishap, or a joke about the seemingly inappropriate choice of music or floral tribute. These gentle jokes are seen by Berger as the kind that have the effect of

suspending the rules of ordinary life; they can make the situation seem better temporarily and are a 'transcendence in a lower key', a 'redeeming laughter' (Berger, 1997, p. 205). However, although situated in the world of experience, Berger (1997, p. 206), suggests that the power of humour and that of religious experience have parallels. The power of humour creates a reality that '...has redeeming qualities that are not temporary at all, but rather that point to that other world that has always been the object of religious attitude'. Further, Berger says that the characteristics of humour enable those who share the joke to be transported to other times outside reality (as experienced in an intense religious transcendence), as though experiencing a threshold that can be passed over and back. Additionally, and pertinent to this study, Berger suggests that 'this transcendence need not be understood in religious terms' (Berger, 1997, p.210), that the level of transcendence may pass from lower to higher key, in which the comedy 'presents a world without pain'. Through this form of transcendence, even the painful realities dealt with in black-humour are neutralized, when translated into comedy terms. There is a period of suspension, an escape from reality provided by humour (Ibid).

Whilst gallows humour featured heavily in the survey results, evidence of another kind of humour was also apparent; described as 'insider' or situated humour, Chapter Four: *'Maintaining a Spirit of Place'* will explore the subject further. Respondents who chose the private, religious or spiritual methods of coping as an answer to question twenty one, were few in number. Answers comprised: *'pray privately'* 6.3% (4); and *'pray formally later – (any faith/belief/denomination may apply)'* 1.6% (1). One respondent commented that prayer could be used for:

> *Time along* [sic] *helps me clear my head of any thoughts - positive or negative and to clarify any emotions i* [sic] *have - the time in prayer is usually for the family or the deceased but sometimes for me too* [Q21; R:7].

Of the number of respondents who said in answer to *'Do you have a personal religion, belief or spiritual pathway?'* (Appendix 3; Q:31), the highest response was that they *'did'* 40.0% (24), or did *'sometimes'* 18.3% (11). Fifteen respondents chose to disclose religious or faith path with (11) being Christian (of various denominations); (1) said that they were a Jedi,[6] (1) a devout atheist; (1) Quaker animist; and (1) non specific – personal. Data collected for this study shows that 31.7% (19) of respondents said '*no'* they did not; or '*never'* 1.7% (1), had a spiritual pathway or that they *'don't know'* 5.0% (3). Additionally, the data (Appendix 3; Q:33; Q:34) reflects that most respondents said that their personal spirituality or religious pathway helps them come to terms with their own eventual death 56.7% (34) (Appendix 3:1 Graph a.), and also the deaths of others 53.3% (32) (Appendix 3:1 Graph b). However, there were a number of respondents 16.7% (10), who did not have a belief, but

[6] Jedi is not recognised as an official religion by The Office for National Statistics see http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/ssdataset.asp?vlnk=7681&Pos=2&ColRank=2&Rank=256.

also when data was cross tabbed, revealed that that their lack of spiritual pathway, helped them to come to terms with their own death (Appendix 3:1 Graph c), and the death of others (Appendix 3: Graph d). Further to this, 23.3% (14) said that they '*don't know'* if belief or lack of it helped them come to terms with their own death. What's more, when asked if their belief or lack of it helped them come to terms with the death of others, 18.3% (11) said *'no'* , it didn't help and 21.7% (13) said that they *'don't know'* . Two respondents commented about this uncertainty: *'I don't feel it helps or hinders either way'* [Q33; R9]; the second elaborates:

> *Sometimes – its* [sic] *difficult when faith doesn't offer an explanation - but i* [sic] *suppose faith is different to religion and I might be looking for answers in the wrong place* [Q33; R7].

Despite the premise that people turn to religion for comfort in the face of death (Zuckerman, 2008, p.57), religious methods of transcendent coping, such as religion or prayer, were less widely reported by respondents, than non religious aspects of immanence, such as striving to achieve the best possible results at work, enjoyment of the job in hand and the use of humour. The respondents tendency for concentration on the moment in hand could be equated to the 'experiential transcendence' that Lifton (1977, p.279) suggests when citing Eliade; he considers that it is 'characterised by extraordinary psychic unity and perceptual intensity'. Furthermore, 'one must "know death" in order to live with free imagination (Lifton1983, p.47). In corroboration, coping through immanence or experiential transcendence rather than religious transcendence seems to reflect what Walter (1994, p.55-56) asserts; that although traditionally courage in the face of death was found through 'prayer and ritual', in modern times recourse to time alone or silent contemplation or a more individual activity may be more prevalent as coping mechanisms.

Interestingly, the data conveyed evidence of multiple coping mechanisms, particularly a much wider aspect of spiritual comfort. Female respondents revealed in question twenty one, some distinctive coping methods including a mixture of professional offloading and social or private coping, such as, swimming, body care, housework, watching television and having a cry. These respondents said that they: '*Debrief with skilled fellow-ritualist. Walk and connection in nature. Body-care such as aromatherapy massage or swimming, Crying, Praying'* [Q21; R:14].

Another respondent said:

> *Sometimes a good cry does the trick. At other times I'll sit and brainlessly watch television, or do something constructive, (such as household chores). Depends on how I'm feeling* [Q21; R:16].

The third respondent added information about social interaction with a fellow death professional alongside crying:

> [I] *Often have a drink - go to a quiz with a funeral director once a week and we both talk about stuff we have found hard. have* [sic] *a chat at* [sic] *work, eat nice stuff - also what is not on the list is have a good cry!* [Q21; R:46].

The use of body-care and crying after the funeral as a specific coping mechanism was the only real evidence in the study of gender difference. Data collected from the question: *'Has there been a time where something has moved you to tears at a funeral?'* (Appendix 3; Q: 26) showed that although slightly more men said that they cried during funerals 59.5% (22) than women 57.7% (15); more women respondents said that they cried *'often'* 19.2% (5) than male respondents 2.7% (1). Both genders said that that they had experienced tears during specific funerals (explored fully in Chapter Four: '*Maintaining a Spirit of Place'*). However, it was only females who stated that they used crying as a coping method or as a release after work. More specific research in the future may need to investigate gender specific coping mechanisms. Nonetheless, respondents of both genders indicated throughout the data that having different methods of coping after a difficult funeral was useful. One respondent summed this up by saying:

> *Each funeral is in its own way a difficult event, having various ways to help cope is important as sometimes it may be that you feel the need to lighten the mood with humor,*[sic] *other times a quiet moment to reflect will be all you need* [Q21; R:9].

Conclusion

As a result of analysing the survey results, it would appear that the suspension of death and the ability to create or seek a humour threshold can be achieved, especially through an escape from grief and its trappings. Where some might suggest that people seek religion for comfort from grief, most profoundly, the method by which respondents 'work against death', is through humour. Having both transcendent and immanent aspects, humour, especially 'gallows humour', was the key coping mechanism within all categories of respondents, regardless of job description or gender. It appears predominantly as a vital part of daily work, but also could be seen to differentiate different types of death workers from each other. To clarify, where gallows humour featured strongly, the data also revealed different attitudes to the use of humour, with some seeing it as frivolous or inappropriate. This evidence seemed to suggest the possibility of differences between the coping methods of workers 'on the ground' and those of high level management, who tend to be office based; this aspect could be proven in future study. Hence it could be argued that there is a co-relation between working directly with death and those who actively 'work against death' using humour as a method of coping.

Subsequently, the next chapter explores aspects of teamwork within the crematorium and cemetery setting.

Chapter Three: *Dressing for Effect.*

Through the survey data, this chapter explores how teamwork and 'insider' performance relate directly to the mode of dress worn or perceived by respondents while 'working against death' within crematoria and cemeteries. Respondents revealed that dress affects their professional performance, emotion and behaviour at work. As such, this chapter will also address the ways in which behaviour, dress and situation are intimately linked to physical placement and will explore perceptions about dress in relation to the overarching theme of the study; coping with the presence of death and second hand grief. Additionally, the chapter will discuss two particular sides of professionalism that arose in the data. Intriguingly, coping whilst 'working against death' corresponded to a desire to engage thoroughly, do a good job and to enjoy work, whilst for others coping came, through the use of professional detachment. Whether respondents see what they do at the crematorium or cemetery as more than 'just work' will be examined also.

The terms 'insider' and 'outsider' are used in research to group categories of people in a given situation; a convenient container or point of reference through which to understand how people belong or relate in any given situation or environment (Collins, 2002, p.80). This study has been conducted by a funeral insider and interestingly, during the field study, five [R: F1; F2; F3; F4; F5][7] of the six respondents interviewed said that they thought it was easier talking to someone who was a fellow death worker than someone from outside the business. As one respondent said: *'You understand, I don't have to explain everything to you'* [R: F5]. However, Collins (2002, p.81), argues that when looking at the differences on the spectrum of insider and outsider relationships there is always a marking of first one side then the other at the start regardless of the situation. Yet sometimes this may not be important, because as the remaining respondent said: *'it doesn't matter or make a difference,* [that you are a funeral worker] *I am an extrovert and just open my mouth and say it as it is.'* [R: F6].

In this study, as the survey demonstrates, respondents as 'insiders' may be brought together for a number of reasons, but most commonly for the funeral. A funeral may be seen to appear as a well rehearsed public act or performance, with precision timing, dramatic gesture and some form of appropriate farewell ritual for the central character; the deceased. The working actors present at the crematorium or cemetery, usually vary at every funeral; each service being an individually crafted drama hosted by a separate Funeral Director, who arrives with a team of bearers. They all blend into the resident crematorium or cemetery team and with the chosen celebrant, fulfil their part in the unfolding drama. These combined workers may therefore be termed the 'performance team', 'brought

[7] 'F' refers to the code number for a Respondent interviewed during field study

together to stage a single [or many separate, funeral] routine' (Goffman, 1990, p.85). Cremation or burials may produce a different set of key professionals according to the geographical location, type of ritual and required religious content (or lack of it). Yet, despite the variation in cast, the practical funeral rite at United Kingdom crematoria and cemeteries, follows certain patterns, all framed within the practicalities of transporting and moving the coffin to its resting place and the need for appropriate rhetoric. The 'performance team' (Loc Cit), might constitute a mix of personnel, working and behaving together to stage the ritual and rhetoric, and could therefore be made up of various combinations of death workers, as represented by the range of respondents to this study. When in other crematoria and cemeteries, a familiar place to funeral insiders, most could work comfortably with minor changes to the learned ritual behaviour. This specialised but generalised locational aspect of crematoria and cemeteries will be discussed further in Chapter Four: *'Maintaining a Spirit of Place'*.

Considering the notion of the 'performance team', Goffman (1990, p.88), articulates that teamwork may not need to be something built up by individuals knowing each other over a long period of time, but can be instituted as soon as others join in. Therefore, the team is formal yet ephemeral. Various members may know each other on different levels in and outside of work, but they come together for a short time to play the part or 'maintain a particular impression' (Ibid), which is expected of them during the time that they are on show to outsiders, or while carrying out ritual, rhetoric or routine. This aptly explains the working dynamic of any crematorium or cemetery, in which various individual or groups of insiders, those 'in the know' (Goffman, Ibid), come together to stage different funeral rituals throughout a working day. The concept of an insider/outsider dynamic within the workforce at a crematorium or cemetery may be relatively simple to grasp, however the emotions generated or encountered become very complicated where performance is concerned. As Davies (2002, p.46) says, the performance of grief does not necessarily equate with sincerity. Moreover, although as part of their teams, the survey respondents may encounter 'public tears' (Davies, 2002, p.47) as shed by mourners, and may witness collectively outpourings of intense grief while at work, the perception of the 'emotion in which feeling is ever given shape through thought' (Ibid), is in turn experienced. As an individual, each member of the team will employ different coping mechanisms that relate to their own inner variant of thought and feeling. However, they may also relate to an apparent geographical or social stereotype. For instance, Davies (Ibid), uses the example of 'English reserve and Italian effervescence', but warns that this is only a tip of the variation in a complex area of human behaviour. Whilst this study is limited to its generated data, it also points towards the need for further in depth research into the emotional coping methods of many groups of death workers.

Having identified that it is possible to form teams that maintain an appearance or effect of coherence, even between fluxes of personnel, that sense of order and uniformity at a crematorium or cemetery can also be maintained not only by the collective behaviour of the resident team, but also by the use of the same or contextually similar clothing[8]. Hence, the insiders may bond with other insiders enough to be recognised by the mourners, as those who are there to provide the funeral ritual. The use of uniform can not only unify the appearance of the team, but act to unite disparate groups of workers within a crematorium or cemetery, whenever a corporate image was required. To demonstrate, field observation bore witness to two differently ranked crematorium workers[R: F1 & R:F3], putting on coats with caped shoulders, both standing, attentively and united with hands held in front, by the entrance doors of the crematorium prior to the arrival of the hearse.

Moreover, the survey found that specific clothing reminded workers of the role that they play at a funeral in much the same way that a costume inspires an actor to get into character on stage. More significantly, in this portion of the study, clothing seemed to act as a form of emotional protection while 'working against death'. One respondent expressed that wearing uniform not only helped him transcend the realities of his role, but that the role itself was: *'almost completely defined by my uniform'*. Continuing, he said that it '*protects me emotionally from what I have to do at work, I can be entirely present, larger than life, in control, doing the best job I can, but also be apart from the surrounding grief'* [R: F4]. This respondent saw uniform as forming a major part of his coping strategy and termed getting dressed for his occupation as: *'Putting on my Black Armour'*[R: F4]. This specific interview data indicates how strongly this respondent felt about the protective quality of clothing as a coping mechanism. Further, black has its own significance as a funeral colour. As Webster (2006, p.106) states that wearing:

> Black provides strength and the ability to stand up for yourself when other people are trying to take advantage. It helps eliminate oversensitivity and heightened emotions. However, it also acts as an emotional barrier that keeps people at a distance.

Data Review

To gain quantitative data about respondent's uniform, question nine asked 'are *you required to wear specific clothing?'* (Appendix: 4; Q:9). Out of a total of 65 responses, only 23.1% (15) said that they did not have to wear specific clothing. The clothing worn by respondents fell into categories with some denoting a specific role that was being played, for example: '*ecclesiastical'* 6.2% (4), worn by

[8] This work specific clothing may in this context include uniforms or ritual dress worn by Crematorium and Cemetery staff, plus funeral bearers, organists and the Clergy/Celebrant, but may even include protective clothing worn by Grave diggers.

some clergy/celebrant respondents and '*clerical/academic'* 6.2% (4) worn by some organists. The highest response for this question was: *'Smart Suit'* 46.2% (30), followed by *'Other (please specify)'* 27.7% (18). Only two respondents included an actual clothing specifications, while the other clarifications mostly indicated that the clothing was chosen to suit the job [R:33; R:59]. Two people said clothing was worn at the request of clients. For example it: *'Varies according to preferences of bereaved: formality, with/without black'* [R:14]. Others said it was worn to maintain a corporate [R:35]; or appropriate image [R:15; R:63; R:27]. One respondent combined maintaining corporate image with the use of clothing to sustain and reinforce professional status at work saying: *'We maintain a corporate image and I look smart to provide a professional appearance which fits my position'* [R61]. Four respondents used the word 'smart' to denote the clothing worn [R:62; R:28; R:26; R:24].As such, it is asserted that for death workers, clothing varies according to not only their job, but also the specifics of a funeral.

The next question *'Do you think these clothes help you fulfil your role?'* (Appendix: 4; Q:10), gathered further data about how clothes were perceived. The highest response: *'uniform to denote your role'* 53.8% (35); was followed with quite a drop by: *'no specific clothing worn'* 20.0% (13). A minority said it was for: *'protection'* 15.4% (10). However, 23.1% (15) chose: *'other'* and opted to make comments, providing interesting qualitative data that built on the comments submitted in question nine. Most of the comments to this question followed the lines of smartness and being appropriately dressed for the duties being performed at the crematorium or cemetery. These remarks were summed up by one respondent who stated that they wore *'a smart suit'* and added: *'I think most would see this as a mark of respect both for the grief of the bereaved and for the deceased'* [R:36]. Another respondent went further: *'It is important to look smart. This is professional and respectful. Care shown in personal appearance reflects an overall care for the work we do'* [R:21]. This last response suggests that the respondent sees a clear relationship between standards of personal or corporate image as created by their clothing and the measure of care that mourners perceive to be undertaken by them, whilst they are at work.

However, in direct contradiction, one respondent said they thought that: *'. . . traditional funeral garb can create a barrier between us and the client'* [R:23]. The survey has already revealed that others use distancing created by funeral clothes, as an important form of protection. Hence, the expression 'Black Armour'[R: F4], may be appropriately coined for this type of immanent engagement between emotion and dress, especially when it is worn exclusively whilst 'working against death' at the crematorium or cemetery. Respondents are being transformed by the clothes they wear, perhaps 'working against death' by playing a funeral role, similar to that of a theatrical performance.

Two comments progress the argument further:

> *It is like putting on a performance, creating an image - if you dress the part, it is easier to play the role - it helps to make one feel different. When I take off my suit at the end of the day, it is like stripping off work - shedding the role, it helps me relax. It is very important* [R:61].

and:

> *although not 'required'* [to wear a uniform] *I do feel that by having my 'funeral' outfit/s I mentally prepare for the task I am about to perform& almost go into a different mode by so doing* [R:27].

It is suggested therefore that by *'dressing for effect'*, respondents are not only creating a corporate image, being able to fit into 'performance teams' or showing smartness in respect for the visiting mourners. Notably, clothing worn at work in the crematoria and cemeteries seems to have transformative properties, used by some respondents as a barrier in order to 'work against death'. The need to use clothing, a commonplace aspect of humanity, coupled with respondents' engaging with their own emotions at work, and also the realisation of the need for coping mechanisms against death and grief, have, in turn, provided some of these death workers with a way to transcend the emotional and physical responsibilities of their working day. As Clack (2002, p.8) says, it is not necessary to look at 'transcendence as something imposed on the world from without' but that: '[t]here are other ways of defining transcendence, ways that do not neglect the significance of those immanent features that determine our humanity'. Hence, it might be argued that clothing is part of the ordinariness of being human, but may be used in a transcendent way, therefore:

> The transcendent becomes less something defined in opposition to the features of ordinary human life, and more a facet or way of being to be discovered through the very ordinariness of being human (Ibid).

In previous chapters, survey data and diagnostic discussion has shown that respondents cope with the work that they do in crematoria and cemeteries by engaging in the immanence of the moment, an engagement with several phases. Through realising experientially, the possibility of an emotional reaction and by feeling physically, the rise of intensifying emotion at the time of a humorous event or difficult funeral, respondents subsequently deal with the situation by finding appropriate and effective coping strategies that help them to transcend the moment or 'work against death', whilst also maintaining professionalism. In the survey data respondents seems to employ two significant aspects of professionalism in the pursuit of excellence, either engagement or detachment. Both behavioural

characteristics have shown to be used in order to maintain an aura of self-control at work as they face death and second hand grief.

Where Chapter Two introduced detachment as a coping mechanism, this section will focus on engaging with work and transcendence through professional detachment and doing a good job. When asked *'If you attend multiple funerals during the working day, does the grief of the mourners and intensity of the atmosphere affect you in any particular way, or is it just work?'*(Appendix: 4; Q27), 23 participants skipped the question, (this may relate to the statistics showing non attendance of funerals, see Chapter One, p.7 and Appendix: 2; Q:4), whilst, 42 respondents answered qualitatively, giving insight into personal consciousnesses. Showing an awareness of the issues involved in witnessing second hand grief, the following respondent distinguishes the emotional context of working against death with their preferred coping mechanism of distancing and also the transformative aspect of their work clothing:

> *It is never just 'work' The [sic] load of shared emotions does need to be lifted and we all find our own coping strategies - mine through thinking and listening to music in the car on the way home. Perhaps the clothes are habitual, in that by removing them we take off the mourning cloak and resume our different tasks* [Q.27; R:27].

Another respondent said that sometimes intense work experiences helped them focus on their own situation: *'it depends on the circumstances - sometimes it puts all the niggly little things into sharp perspective & you go home & hug your kids & your partner just a little bit more....'* [Q:27; R:15].

Of the other replies to the question, eleven respondents said that it was *'just work'* [R:5; R:18; R:19; R:32; R:34; R:35; R50; R:57; R:58; R:62; R:63], however, some of the remaining responses expanded or justified how *'just work'* was perceived in the context of excellence; the most comprehensive of these comments is representational:

> *It is never just work but you have to maintain a dignified distance from the grief in order to ensure the families are given the very best service that they deserve. They need you to be there the help and guide them through the occasion - you have to be professional but never lose sight of being human either. Empathy can help* [Q:27; R:21].

Professional excellence was the way in which several respondents said that they coped with multiple funerals, one respondent said that the work did not affect them personally because:

> *This* [sic] *is what I have to do, to make sure each family is able to send off whoever, in the way they need to and want to. To the best of my ability, if necessary 11x a day. We only have one chance to get it right* [Q27; R:59].

However, another respondent acknowledged the emotional impact of their work, but coupled it with knowledge that they had achieved a really good quality of service, which transcended the emotional impact of the event with job satisfaction by saying: '*Of course it can affect you, but as long as you can go home and know you have given a far superior service to the bereaved I can feel content'* [Q:27; R:41].

A further respondent pointed out that all funerals could potentially affect them emotionally, but specifically commented about professional detachment as a method of coping with this:

> *all funerals have some effect and there is always some emotional charge, however there has to be a professional detachment and the ability to concentrate on other factors than the service & so on* [Q:27; R:36].

A final example describes how one respondent appears to have managed to achieve a level of detachment when working on multiple funerals: [it]*'doesn't affect me, because I know every funeral deserves my professional, caring service. If any funeral affected me I couldn't give it to the next'* [Q:27; R:43].

Further to this, when respondents were asked about levels of enjoyment of work: *'Do the following feelings apply for you regularly?'* (Appendix: 4; Q:24), results showed that 77.8% (49), a majority, were regularly *'able to look on the bright side of life'* whilst 71.4% (45) had an *'enthusiasm for work'*. In contrast a small number of respondents 7.9% (5) were regularly *'gloomy'*, and 9.5% (6) did not consider that they were regularly *'enjoying work'*. Reasons for the more negative responses were not specified. Perhaps where personal coping mechanisms work for some respondents, there will undoubtedly be others who do not cope. This research cannot define whether these gloomy responses relate to experiencing second hand grief, but may be linked to the premise that through direct engagement with funerary rites, respondents confront the shadow side of their own existence (Davies, 2002, p.45).

Conclusion

The 'performance team' in the context of a crematorium or cemetery fluctuates throughout the working day. Although the key members may actually be employed by the crematoria or cemetery authorities they assimilate other transient workers into the team as they arrive for each funeral. Unity is maintained by a combination of professional behaviour and a mode of dress within the parameters of the mourners' requirements and local funeral customs. Uniform worn by respondents who work in crematoria and cemeteries has shown to be significant to some as a protective outfit that can be shed at the end of the day. It is worn not only as a physical item of personal attire, but also as an indicator

of status or role. Furthermore, working clothes act to remind respondents of the role that they play and helps them perform the work they need to do at a slight distance from the mourners. As such, the term 'Black Armour', seems the most befitting descriptor when referring to death workers' clothing and their 'dressing for effect', against death and grief.

Following discussions about professional detachment, it is suggested that the ways in which respondents perceived their use of clothing and being a member of a team, an 'insider' who provides the best service possible at each and every funeral, are linked. Each exemplifies a method of coping with second hand grief that is centred on professional detachment; stepping back from, and transcending the moment of the funeral, going beyond it, by operating slightly outside the personal drama of grief that they may be witnessing from mourners, as do other modes of detachment, such as withdrawal. Yet, as the data shows, detachment and emotional protection also appear to come by engaging with death intensely. The level of professional detachment that succeeds in allowing respondents to report that they can cut through witnessed grief, may arguably be reached by way of entering a state of intense concentration. 'This is the state you can reach through meditation or when you are so engrossed in an activity, you have no recollection of the passing of time' (Williams, 2010, p.16). Further, this detached state of attention is needed in order to do a good job, while at the same time working against death and coping in whatever personal way they choose. Thus, respondents show that by achieving a professional, informed and measured understanding of death, and the knowledge of a need to defend themselves against it, while also acknowledging the requirements of the mourners they serve, they are able to reach what Chidester (1990, p.40), calls an 'experiential transcendence' of death. This would also reflect what Clack (2002, p. 8) asserts, because as the survey data shows, when working in a determinedly human way and striving to provide a perfect funeral ritual, several respondents may be entering into an experiential immanence that in turn has transcendent qualities.

Chapter Four: *Maintaining a 'Spirit of Place'.*

This chapter will continue to look at data concerned with the respondents' varied emotional reactions at work, by discussing them within the context of an interpretative metaphoric 'landscape', a state of mind within people that has evolved through experience, personal meaning and professional context that can be revisited at any time. Although cemeteries and crematoria remain generic physical and functional locations, the metaphoric 'landscape' evolves. As each and every individual (both mourners and death workers) brings their own meaning to the funeral's physical location, they create a 'spirit of place' collectively. In isolation, the location itself is not sacred; it becomes sacred through the meaning people attribute to it (Davies, 1996, p.91). Hence, rather than being seen solely in terms of a particular work location, the crematorium or cemetery develops social and cultural meanings. 'Spirit of place', can 'stimulate reflection about the nature of both the cultural and physical context' (Sneddon, 1997, p.141), but lasts only as long as it remains relevant and important to the community. As discussed in Relph (1976, pp. 34-35), the links between places and people reflect the context and significance of the physical landscape for society. Further, Davies (1996, p. 86), explores the way in which the crematorium building or landscape is brought together through an 'involvement' with the people who use it during an act of ceremonial ritual, specifically relating to a funeral. This can also be applied to the cemetery environment. The 'involvement' is applicable for both mourners and workers, as well as members of the wider community, although each individual will respond to it, feel it, or remember it in a personal and unique way (Davies, 1996, p.86; Relph, 1976, p. 36), depending on what emotions are evoked from their own life experiences or memories. 'We make sense of our experiences' (Von Doussa, 2009, p. ix) and take strength in their personal meanings, yet our commitment to that personal predilection comes only from our limitations.

Moreover, it is important to recognise that the evocative 'spirit of place' found in areas where humans place the remains of their dead, is not dependent on religious rhetoric or beliefs. Unconsecrated[9] municipal cemeteries or faith neutral crematoria may feel sacred, simply because they are places that Harrison (2003, p.xii) terms, the 'dominion of the dead'. The ritual importance of a particular death may continue well beyond the act of the funeral itself and the relationship with the place of the dead extends beyond the physical. Hence, the memory of a specific death transmutes into cultural internalised memory (Harrison, 2003, pp. 50-51). In support of the depth of significance and the perpetuating quality of the 'spirit of place' within the individual and in the land of the dead, Kate Woodthorpe (2007, p.6), found while researching in cemeteries, 'that gravestones were often used as

[9] Consecrated ground within a cemetery/church yard is an area that has been blessed and set aside by clergy of a particular denomination, for the burial of members of that specific denomination. Unconsecrated ground is therefore open for burials of deceased people from other denominations/faith-paths.

physical representatives of the dead' and that by tending graves, people may actually be engaging in 'personal rituals for the deceased person by way of the gravestone', a behaviour that could also be transferred when tending a named columbarium or cremated remains plot. In fact, '[s]ometimes this cemetery is not even a real place, but literally a place inside. It is the place of memories, of reconnection, a place where we can feel very close to our loved one' (Schwaigert, 2010, p.130). Clearly the transformative nature of 'spirit of place' enables individuals to create sacredness in the physical location.

Consequentially, the profoundly important internal 'landscape' that respondents hold as a result of encountering death and grief, as they 'work against death', bonds them together in the physical landscape as a community. The community then has the ability to transgress formalities of accepted social behaviour (Turner, 2002, p. 372) and creates commonality among the individuals, a 'common identity' with each other and as fellow insiders within the containment of the crematorium and cemetery setting (Relph, 1976, p.45). This metaphorical bond or commonality between death workers is expressed in the data, as respondents show incidents of 'insider' emotion, relative to the visiting mourners who represent 'outsiders' (Relph, Loc Cit).

Alongside the more strident and highly transformative gallows humour, reactive humour appears in the survey results as a coping mechanism against death and second hand grief. Within the ambient landscape of the crematorium and cemetery, reactive, spontaneous work related humour is understood to be the gently transcendent humour previously described,[10] as having a 'lower key transcendence' (Berger, 1997, p. 205). In this chapter reactive humour will be discussed in terms of locational arguments from '*On Humour',* a work by Simon Critchley (2002), who states that 'humour puts us back in place, whether the latter is our neighbourhood, region or nation' (2002, pp.73-74). This same premise can be applied to survey respondents who identified clearly as being 'insiders' at work. For instance, when in the context of 'working against death' in a distinctive 'sacred' (Davies, 1996, p.86) location, respondents may be 'placed' by the humour that they experience.

Accordingly, this chapter draws on the survey data to broaden the insider/outsider theme. Situated insider humour is important for death workers because it not only places people 'in the know' collectively, indicating that it has a social and contextual purpose, but as a coping function, it acts to bind the members of the participating group together, sometimes in, or after extreme situations of

[10] See: Chapter Two page, 22.

crisis that need to be worked against:

> The humour involved, as any other type of humour, is contextual. In this particular social and historical context, it functions as a code that delineates both through "inclusive humour" (enhancing group cohesion) and "exclusive humour"...the boundaries of a social identity (Cardeña, 2003, p.128).

Following the idea of forming bonds through collective experiences, the survey investigated whether tears had the same unifying effect as humour. As such, data was collected specifically around respondents being moved to tears at funerals. Interestingly, the bond of sharing that respondents suggest exists between fellow participants of 'inclusive humour' (Cardeña, Loc Cit), seems not to show up in the data as being similarly utilised in the case of tears. Whilst many respondents said that laughter and tears were both reactions that they encountered at times during funerals in the workplace, respondents who commented on being moved to tears during a funeral, often also spoke of withdrawing from the situation or hiding their tears from colleagues. Where laughter was shared, tears seemed more private. Moreover, when experienced while 'on the job', both of these contrasting personal human reactions, may be seen as incompatible with the expected and exacting performance of the respondents' professional role. Creating a conflict for the death worker, when directly involved in the funeral ritual or rhetoric, this professional role needs to be performed with a high level of what Goffman (1990, p.59), terms as 'expressive control, a notion that aims to curb such things as spontaneous outbursts of laughter or tears. However, interestingly, in the survey, respondents felt able to share moments in which they had felt moved emotionally by the ambiance of the event, often being moved beyond easy control. By sharing this information respondents indicated that although they were experienced death workers, they were still subject to human emotions and vulnerabilities. In spite of the performance required of them and the protective distancing discussed in the previous chapter, *'Dressing for Effect'*, they showed evidence of tapping into some of the various emotions generated by the funerals they attended; no doubt, a challenging task, while working with death in the physical landscape of the crematorium or cemetery.

Data Review

Whilst previous chapters have discussed evidence of the use of gallows humour as a coping mechanism against second hand grief, additional survey data implies that 'insider' humour is being used to lighten the atmosphere at work, in recreational time or as a reaction to an un-scheduled event during a funeral ritual, usually a mishap, or accident.

Responses to the question: *'Has there been a time when something has made you really 'crack up' with laughter at a funeral?* (Appendix: 5; Q:25) revealed that although humorous incidents at funerals

were being shared with mourners, the involvement of this type of humour was between co-workers (or other 'insiders') predominantly. Although in answer to this question, more respondents 52.4% (33), said *'no'* they had not cracked up with laughter during a funeral, than those who said *'yes'* they had 34.9% (22) some said that they cracked up *'often'* 7.9% (5). In contrast, 4.8% (3) said that they *'never'* cracked up. Additionally, several respondents added qualitative comments, some of which related humorous incidents that they had experienced. These comments were interesting as they demonstrated ways in which the rigid dynamics of the funeral ritual or professional etiquette between workers and mourners could be breached by humour. They also described ways in which support from fellow 'insiders' was sought or perceived. It was evident from the data that sometimes the 'insiders' provided the source of comedy and that the resulting humour was hidden or masked from the mourners by those involved. In some instances, humour was experienced at the time of an incident, but suppressed until it could be enjoyed at an appropriate time, after the mourners had departed. It could be suggested therefore that the attractiveness of humour as a coping mechanism is that the user defines how and when it is employed, allowing the individual to bond through it with colleagues as and when is needed.

Humour about funeral related incidents, was seen by one respondent specifically as a coping mechanism and this comment demonstrates the use of delay in achieving the benefit of the humour:

> *Its* [sic] *a coping mechanism - you feel great after a good laugh and its* [sic] *never disrespectful - but its* [sic] *usually triggered by something that JUST happens - a spur of the moment thing. And things DO happen!!! I just try and be a bit subtle and not let it show in the wrong place.....go out afterwards and have a good laugh out loud* [Q25; R:62].

This emphasis on the humour being experienced but internalised, then vented appropriately somewhere behind the scenes, was echoed by another respondent: '*You laugh internally at the moment of situation and once the mourners have left you break out in laughter.'* [Q25; R:5].

This comment also speaks of experiencing humour during funerals, as well as the need for appropriate use of reactive humour, while another respondent also talks of workers and mourners uniting when sharing spontaneous humour:

> [The times I have cracked up are] *So many! I suppose the main thing is not to crack up in a way that would upset the mourners.....mind you - sometimes it is them that crack up too! Usually it is in reaction to something that goes a bit wrong - or if someone says something that just catches your humour. Never at anyones* [sic] *expense* [Q25; R:61]

Sometimes respondents said that unavoidable or unexpected things happened that made them laugh:

> *At one funeral - the vicar was talking* and [sic] *a little child got up from the front row and went over and pressed the button by mistake.....the coffin went down - it was* only [sic] *3 minutes in to the service!* [Q25; R:63]

Another respondent also said that humour was a very regular occurrence. They spoke specifically of an incident that made them laugh, but that their reaction to the episode was hidden from the mourners:

> *Hundreds* [of things have made me crack up] *over the years!*
> *One time the Revd. walked backwards to give the family time at the grave, tripped on a stone and fell on his back. the family were oblivious. He was trying to brush the grass of* [sic], *I was curled up with laughter. Little things happen every day that make you laugh* [Q25; R:59].

Separate incidents reported by two respondents showed how a similar experience with windblown ashes,[11] might produce a different kind of humorous reaction. It appears that the tension relieving qualities of humour can be shared by mourners and death workers together, whilst different circumstances reflect the need for more private humour. Clearly, the challenge for and skill of the death worker is to understand the suitability of shared humour in each situation.

> *The first time I scattered ashes in front of a family, a gust of wind took most of them over the hedge and away - I looked horrified at the family, who hesitated and then all creased up laughing - I joined in mostly in relief* [Q25; R:36].

The second respondent said:

> *Whilst burying some ashes the chief mourner invited family members* [sic] *come forward, one by one, to receive a handful of ashes. Then* [they had] *to put the handful into the excavation. This went well until the last mourner kept some in her hands &, on standing up, tossed the remains into the air. This would probably have been fine but for the following wind that took the ashes into the faces of the rest of tyhr* [sic] *mourners! Both the Funeral Director & I started laughing, almost silently, but fortunately far enough away from the mourners that they couldn't see us smiling or our shoulders going up & down from the laughter* [Q25; R:51].

Burying or scattering ashes in the cemetery or crematorium grounds, after a cremation, is an event invested with whatever kind of emotion that the attending mourners bring to it. If no mourners are present, then the worker is charged with the task on the mourners' behalf. As the final act of a cremation, the disposal of ashes is essentially a transformative funerary ritual, where the body changes state and potentially takes on a new form of memorial identity (Davies, 1996, p.36). It is an emotionally important act for mourners and therefore essential for the 'insider' team to get right on

[11] 'Ashes' are a way of referring to cremated human remains.

behalf of them and for the wider community. As Thomas Lynch (1998, p. xviii) the poet, writer and undertaker says, death workers do not simply do something with the dead, they do something for the living, they carry it out as fellow living beings on behalf of all of us. This act of the death worker 'insider', doing something on behalf of the 'outsider' mourner, is highlighted by the very act of cremation, in which the cremation process is implicit and unseen, hidden from the mourners behind closed doors. The communal areas of crematoria and cemeteries bring the community together for the ritual and rhetoric, but the 'insider' working against death, does the implicit deed of placing the coffined remains into the incinerator and dealing with the transformed remains away from, and on behalf of, the community (Davies, 1996, p.84). Burial, in contrast, is a more explicit act which mourners may both witness and participate in[12], bringing together the 'insider' and 'outsider' for a shared experience.

Sometimes the humour that respondents commented on experiencing within their physical working landscape was due to unusual choices made about the funeral ritual, generally assumed to be public. The following two examples were generated by memories of a request before death, from the deceased:

> *There was a retired admiral aged 95 who left very intricate and specific instructions for the music to be played. Lots of references to the sea - whole prayer book service, the lot.....no mourners at all!!! His request* [Q:25; R63].

On one occasion, the survey respondent knew that a secret request had been carried out causing private mirth:

> *A gentleman wanted to pre book his funeral and wanted to be dressed as a clown in the coffin. I found this very funny as he gave strict instructions not to be viewed before burial and not to inform the family of his request. The funeral director (a business i* [sic] *was also a director of) respected his wishes and it made me laugh to think of the jolly old man dressed as a clown, as was his wish* [Q:25, R:30].

Another respondent reported experiencing humour when a minister delivered an unexpectedly short ritual for a deceased man, but said that they avoided an inappropriate reactive outburst and enjoyed the joke later in the comfort of 'insider' territory:

> *one was a visiting minister "we are all gathered here to say goodbye to 'Fred'..... Good Bye" end of service. I bit my lip until it was safe to laugh (back in the staff room)* [Q:25; R:15].

[12] This may vary. Examples include: helping to dig or fill the grave; lower the coffin; throw handfuls of earth or flowers into the grave.

Humour was also reported in relation to some of the characters respondents encountered at work. The same respondent said:

> *I was told someone wanted to talk about their mother's funeral and was warned that they were a TV.*[13] *They arrived; it was a man with a very gruff voice dressed in a little pink outfit with fishnets and high heels. They wanted me to play 'dance of the sugar plum fairy' for the coffin to enter in to* [Q:25; R:63].

Humour was also found in a shared poignant moment with a mourner:

> *following* [sic] *the death of her husband, an elderly widow once said that the officiant had been wonderful. Most caring and thoughtful, including her late husband's special saying in the service at the time of committal was much appreciated. She then said through her tears but with a glint in her eye -'he had lovely come to bed eyes too!' I didn't know where to look but she laughed heartily at her comment and I have to say I laughed too - her spirit seemed to lift a little and she was smiling as she left* [Q25; R21].

Sometimes in contrast to the former story of gentle but cheeky appreciation from a mourner, the humour source was more vivid and could only be fully appreciated after the event; a respondent commented:

> *occasionally, it's only amusing retrospectively....like when a family member of the deceased reached through the open window of the limousine and floored the widow with a right hook.....it was awful at the time, but in the re-telling the funny side has to be seen* [Q25; R15].

Music chosen to be played at funerals was sometimes also found to induce humour. Music is a key ingredient in creating atmosphere and ambiance within the landscape of the crematorium chapel during the funeral ritual. It can make or break the moment and change the mood, sense, or spirit of place instantly. Composition of any kind can be deemed appropriate for a funeral, by evoking memories about the deceased. It can be relaxing, uplifting or comforting for mourners, but may appear strangely inappropriate in the face of death to funeral insiders who may not know the deceased. One respondent commented that music was often humorous saying: '*sometimes it's the music at services* [that makes me laugh]...*bring me sunshine, match of the day, burn baby burn at a cremation'* [Q25; R15].

[13] Transvestite – cross dresser.

Or alternatively, as in these two reported instances, respondents told of humorous musical catastrophes. Firstly:

> *I recently had to play some music for a funeral service. The music was played by the marines band. the piece of music to be played on exit was left to me. I chose "March of the Gladiators" I thought that it would be a nice piece of music. In fact when it started i realised that the piece of music is associated with clowns, and is very light and upbeat, everyone on the office (apart from me) was on the floor with laughter. luckily the family were happy with the choice, but even now if someone says we can choose the staff shout out "don't let him choose"* [Q:25; R48].

and secondly: '*I got handed a CD - Mull of Kyntyre* [sic]- *didn't have a chance to check it.....it was do they know it's Christmas...'* [Q:25; R63].

In answer to the direct question: *'Has there been a time where something has moved you to tears at a funeral?'* (Appendix: 5; Q:26), it is interesting to note that out of the 63 respondents who generated the quantitative data (discussed in Chapter Two), 42 of these respondents also chose to make additional qualitative comments. As tears were revealed earlier to be more private than humour, perhaps the survey gave respondents an opportunity to share the more secret experience of tears anonymously, aiding their transcendence of death.

In fact, question 26, received the highest response of any of the qualitative data the survey generated. This suggests that it is a prime indicator that the respondents are indeed working against death. Respondents described how music made them cry, how suppression of the emotion was used and how escape into a safe 'insider' space away from the source of emotion and therefore any witnesses, was also utilized. One respondent said:

> *It's generally the music. Matt Monro, 'softly as I leave you' gets me every time, and '2 little boys' does the same. I either bite my lips & focus on something else, or slip quietly out the chapel until it's over* [Q:26 R:15].

Another respondent said they cried when: '*Singing hymns, hearing other people sniffing, trying to sing. I try to suppress it but often can't'* [Q:26; R:10].

However, some respondents commented that they cried at funerals which touched them either because of the rhetorical content or when they felt personal sympathy with those involved, or empathy with the situation that they perceived the mourners to be in. For instance, one respondent who was often moved to tears by the funeral rhetoric about the deceased, expressed their views about the value of a

private vantage point behind the scenes, so they could cry without suppression:

> *Whilst operating the music system for the crematorium chapel - this entailed listening to the eulogy. Often the stories of people who struggled through the war years and made the best of limited resources to bring up loving families would reduce me to tears. It wasn't always sad stories that made me cry, but stories were the deceased had given selflessly or achieved results despite poor odds. Because I was on my own out of view I was able to shed tears without it affecting the funeral* [Q:26; R:17].

There were also several comments which showed that the respondents saw commonalities or resemblances to either their own life situation or likeness of that of a family member, which moved them to tears. An instance from these comments was in response to a funeral of a child:

> *We were burying a young lad, 4/5 years old who had been tragically murdered by his mother in a fit of severe mental illness - the family brought a photo of him and I was instantly struck by the likeness between him and my own son of the same age. I walked away for a few minutes, took a few deep breaths, told myself I wasn't doing the family any good and went back* [Q:26; R:36].

In addition, a particularly moving funeral for a baby made this respondent cry:

> *At a baby funeral the mother had to pass the baby to me. At that moment she would not let go of the coffin and was crying her eyes out. I told her that the baby would be safe with me, she asked me to promise, by this time I was also crying, but promised. She let go of the coffin and I slowly took the coffin away. After the service I had a long slow walk around our grounds* [Q:26; R:48].

The previous two examples of children's funerals bring into sharp focus how closely crematorium and cemetery workers 'work against death'. In previous chapters, the data shows that many respondents feel that the funeral of a youngster is the most difficult to work on. If this is the case, seeing a photograph at the funeral of an unknown child that evokes thoughts about one's own offspring, or seeing a parent in deep distress, clearly needs to be worked through in order to regain professional composure. As an example, the next comment is from a respondent who finds children's funerals difficult due to having their own children, but who found that the mourners have sometimes appreciated this as a shared difficulty:

> *I have found the burial of children very hard since having children of my own. I try to be respectful of the death and the family and remain professional in my duties. However this is not always possible and I have found that families usually respect that it is a difficult time for ourselves as well* [Q:26; R:30].

This response indicates that a level of shared understanding of the difficulties involved in funerals may sometimes become apparent between working insiders and visiting outsiders at the crematoria or cemeteries. The individual's metaphoric internal landscape creates a spirit of place that sees worker and mourner bond. In this instance, the respondent is seen as a member of a wider and shared community, rather than an invisible face that blends into the background. This sharing in the collective grief that builds the 'spirit of place' in crematoria or cemeteries is expressed in the comment of one respondent who has no problem with expressing emotion through tears:

> *It's OK. I just cry. Wipe the tears & carry on...occasionally both at a death registration, interview with a family or a funeral I have shed tears. I do not find a problem with that - that is the reason we are there, to share our humanity and care. I think people only bother if you seem uncaring,*[sic] *a shared emotion is never going to discredit anyone is it?* [Q:26; R:27].

A further respondent who has a lot of contact with mourners says: '*We cry often with a family and my wife cries at every funeral.'* [Q:26; R:23]. However, this experience of openly shared tears is a minority one in the data. Many respondents tried to cope by remembering that they were trying to fulfil a professional role as we have seen in the previous chapter *'Dressing for Effect'.*

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the crematorium and cemetery, as locations of end of life practice, have properties that go far beyond that of a geographical locality. There is a sense of the sacred about them which is carried about by individuals as an emotional landscape, varying in intensity according to personal experiences or situation. In unison, the internal and the physical landscape, act to bind the workforce together, as located insiders who respond to the emotions generated daily within the place, either grief or humour. These emotional experiences, sometimes shared, with colleagues and mourners, but often private, all act to imbue the meaning within the place. The act of disposal of the dead and the associated emotional experiences are what make the place. Furthermore, while working against death and witnessing second hand grief and humour. Data showed that respondents, at times, experienced emotional reactions and responses that had to be modified or suppressed, in order to protect the mourners, the 'spirit of place' and additionally, the mourners' personal anticipation of the sense of the 'sacred'. In other words, the workforce must operate on two levels, because crematoria and cemeteries and events witnessed within them, evoke an intensity of memory, directly connected to the located emotional reaction that has been experienced there as places for the disposal of our dead. The need for occasional emotional suppression at work, even if it is not shared at the time, further acts to bind the workers into a located insider team. In the case of humour, the data ascertains that humour is being used as a shared language between death workers and as perceived by

respondents, is a useful method of coping; like tears, it may be a sudden and reactive expression against the grief or humour of the moment or saved for later effect.

Conclusion

In this snapshot study of workers with varied occupations within United Kingdom crematoria and cemeteries, survey data has provided information about the ways in which respondent workers viewed death in relation to their work and life. The survey, field observation and short interviews confirmed that for the respondents, working against death did have an emotional impact, moreover, that immanent and transcendent coping strategies were being utilised in order for respondents to deal with experiencing second hand grief in their working environment. Survey data revealed that humour was a coping strategy that many respondents used both at work and in spare time. The chapters of the study that explore areas of coping are linked through the theme of humour and how it is used by respondents.

While survey data discussed in Chapter One: *'Working Against Death'* demonstrated that for many respondents, repeat exposure to second-hand grief generated an emotional response in the workplace. Grief seen through funeral ritual and rhetoric at work was also seen in the data to have the potential to influence the life and emotion of respondents, both during work and afterwards at home, penetrating into their leisure time and influencing relationships and conversations. Thus, the concept of 'Working against Death' can be seen not only in terms of being 'beyond the superficial' as Davies (2002, p.3), describes it, but also as a necessary and profound defensive strategy for these death workers.

In addition to providing data about coping with witnessing second hand grief at work, this study's survey also collected information, which may be useful for university and industry education providers who wish to look into the wider crematorium and cemetery work population, specifically in order to devise courses or further support for staff. However, space limitation did not allow this aspect of the project to be explored fully.

Chapter Two: *'Searching for a Transcendence of Death',* discussed the various coping strategies respondents employed for working against death. A particularly strong finding in the data was the use of transcendent humour, principally gallows humour, by respondents from all categories of the workforce within crematoria and cemeteries. Interestingly, in the study this feature was found to be a more predominant coping mechanism for respondents than religious transcendence, described in the survey as recourse to prayer.

The ability of respondents to take time out in the work environment, aside from mourners, also arose as a key method of coping with second hand grief. The importance of these escape areas in the crematorium and cemetery landscape cannot be over emphasised. They represent patterns of withdrawal that are being used deliberately, by respondents in order to transcend or cope with the

situations they are conscious of, immanently involved in and those they have reacted to emotionally. Where the crematorium or cemetery landscape may be unfamiliar to grieving mourners, it offers a comfortable familiarity to death workers.

Clearly in this snapshot study, there has not been the opportunity to obtain conclusive evidence in spirituality or humour, both complex areas of phenomenology. However, this research has shown that the wider population of Crematoria and Cemetery workers has potential for further in depth investigation into specific aspects of immanent and transcendent coping with death related work.

The research data discussed in Chapter Three: *'Dressing for Effect'* illustrated how respondents as 'insiders', were working in an environment where they attended the funerary ritual, met visiting 'outsiders', the mourners and witnessed the repetitive arrival of death related paraphernalia. Data showed that respondents coped with being surrounded by death by engaging immanently with it, by appreciating it may have an effect, then defensively, distancing themselves from it and aiming for a certain element of detachment. This distancing was achieved at times through the use of uniform or work clothes. Acting metaphorically as an emotional barrier, the work costume provided the respondents with a professional character to play. Most significantly, uniform became an outer protective layer, a black armour', setting them apart from the mourners' grief and that could be shed after work.

Survey data also indicated that for some respondents, experience of death at work related to their own life or family experience, describing how funerals they had worked on, or witnessed, had evoked memories of deaths and grief that they had encountered personally. Death was considered very real for the respondents. Rather than the funeral being solely about performing professionally, the emotive aspects of death and grief were familiar and ever-present. In these circumstances, respondents engaged with death and grief and coped by working against it as was appropriate to each of them as individuals and within the framework of their own personal working and emotional landscape. Moreover, death was reported as being a topic that respondents visited on various occasions outside work, as well as within the context of their occupation. Interestingly, although analysis of the data revealed that respondents were working against death, many considered themselves privileged to work with death. To them, it was not just a job. It had different parameters and responsibilities that sharpened a person's perspectives on life.

Data showed that many respondents had great respect for the mourners' grief and understood the need to do the best job for them, especially in situations where respondents felt that their own emotions may have started to show. Comments, in which respondents spoke about potential emotional outbursts

at work, due to having been touched by feelings evoking tears or laughter, were careful to point out that their own reaction was often suppressed and expressed later outside the sight or hearing of the mourners. Crucially, respondents placed being professional and making sure that the ambiance of the funeral was not affected adversely as more important than their own needs.

Rather than individually or geographically, Chapter Four: *'Maintaining a Spirit of Place'* examined crematoria and cemeteries interpretively, looking at them contextually as a workplace and a 'location' with a 'spirit of place' or sense of sacredness. This interpretive approach aimed to further unify survey respondents who were from diverse geographical locations; their relationship with second hand grief, as 'insiders' in the landscape of death, has been seen throughout the data to be a different one for those who visit crematoria and cemeteries once or twice a year to attend a funeral or an anniversary day.

Key to this chapter was the understanding that the crematoria and cemeteries do not have inherent meaning. Their meaning comes from a cultural and social context, born out of individuals coming together to form a collective memory. It is this collective 'spirit of place' that creates sacredness in the tangible sense. Taking the discussion further, the chapter used the context of an internal metaphoric landscape to the review survey results that dealt with respondents' emotions at work. In the course of discussing the experience of tears and Critchley's notion of workplace humour being a shared located language (2002, pp.73-74), the study revealed that 'insider' humour is being used by death workers to lighten the atmosphere at work, in recreational time or as a reaction to an un-scheduled event during a funeral ritual. There are several areas that would benefit from further investigation, including humour as an immanent coping mechanism, especially in the area of gallows humour and the taboo aspects of achieving transcendence through laughing in the face of death. Yet, within the bounds of this study, a great deal has been revealed and would serve as a good foundation for further research.

In summary, this is an original study on an under-researched population. Through survey results and subsequent interviews, respondents have revealed to be implementing a range of coping strategies to deal with the second hand grief they witness daily. They appear to strive to maintain a professional role for mourners, but equally are affected by the emotions and experiences they are involved with as death workers. Although respondents came from a wide variety of roles within United Kingdom crematoria and cemeteries, the coping mechanisms they implement, centre on engagement and detachment, primarily through tears, humour and clothing. Whilst death workers who witness second hand grief seem to be achieving relative immanence and transcendence of death, the need to work against death is ever present and remains an ephemeral transient consciousness moulded by the physical and emotional landscape.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:1 The University of Winchester Ethics Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences **CONFIDENTIAL**
Ethics Release and Approval

Section 1

Project title or area: Digging Deep: Investigating Transcendent and Immanent Coping Strategies – Against Other Peoples Grief – In Crematoria and Cemetery Workers from Southern England.

Applicant: Marianne Angela McLachlan: 0404669

Supervisor: Dr. Christina Welch

Does the research involve:	
Other people?	**YES**
Any material/information that is not already available for study?	**No**
Any material/information/practices that may cause concern to other people?	**No**

IF THE ANSWER TO EACH OF THE ABOVE QUESTIONS IS 'NO', you are entitled to **Ethics Release.** Please read the statements below and sign the confirmation.
IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED 'YES' TO ANY OF THE ABOVE QUESTIONS, you need to complete Section 2 and sign the confirmation at the end of that.

Declaration: I have read the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences policy on ethics related to Research and Knowledge Exchange and to the best of my knowledge and ability confirm that the ethical considerations noted have been assessed. I understand that the ethical propriety of this project may be monitored by the Faculty RKE Ethics Committee .

Student Signature:  Date: 11/11/09

Supervisor Signature: I confirm that as supervisor I will monitor progress of the project:

Signature  Date 11/11/09

Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the project should be notified to the Chair of the Faculty Research and Knowledge Exchange Ethics Sub-Committee and may require a new application for ethics approval.

APPENDIX 1:2 Pilot Survey

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Questionnaire: For personnel working in crematoria and cemeteries.

Contact details:

TUTOR:
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Introduction:

This is by nature a study of personal attitudes, feelings and beliefs, however, it is entirely voluntary; please leave out questions that you do not wish to answer.
As the researcher, I will comply with the ethical conditions set out by the University of Winchester and will follow guidelines from the statement of ethical practice for the British Sociological Association. I am aware of the code of ethics of the ICCM.
Data and findings will be reported respecting candidate's anonymity.

INSTRUCTIONS:
Along with this form, you will receive copies of an information form and two consent forms. Please sign both, keep one and return the other with your completed questionnaire form, sealed in the envelope provided. Hand it back to the person who is handling the study at your Crematorium. They will return the envelopes to me, but will not have access to your information.

Contact for post-distress help:
I have designed this study so that participants are 'death workers', selected at each Crematoria contacted in the study. Distress is not anticipated, due to the nature of the work

that you do, however, if undertaking this study has caused distress, please feel that you can contact these organisations for help:

The Samaritans: Tel: 08457 909090 http://www.samaritans.org/
email: jo@samaritans.org

Cruise Bereavement: Tel: 08444779400 http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/
email: helpline@cruise.org.uk

These questions are Voluntary, please answer as many as you feel able to.

Section 1. Personal Please Answer in the Spaces Provided and/or Tick Boxes

1. What is your official Job Title? .....

2. How long have you been working here? .....

3. Do you have a Job Specific Qualification? ..... | **Yes** | **No** |

   if 'Yes' please describe .....

4. Please give a brief description of Duties.....

   .....

   .....

   .....

5. Does your job entail attending the funeral?..... | **Yes** | **No** |

   The procession only ..... | **Yes** | **No** |

   The whole service ..... | **Yes** | **No** |

   If 'Yes' In what capacity? .....

   .....

6. Does your job entail contact with Mourners ? ..... | **Yes** | **No** |

   If 'Yes' Describe what contact .....

   .....

   .....

7. Are you required to wear specific clothing ? .....

If 'Yes' tick all that apply

Pinstripe Trousers/skirt	☐
Clerical/Academic or Ecclesiastical	☐
Frock Coat	☐
Smart Suit	☐
Overalls/PPE	☐
Other.....	
.....	

Describe why you wear it? .....

.....

.....

8. Do these Clothes help you to fulfil your role?

How/why .....

.....

.....

Protection	☐
Uniform to Denote Role	☐
Other	
.....	

9. Gender

Male	**Female**	**Rather not say**

Age

18-30	**30-50**	**50-60**	**60+**	**Rather not say**

Section 2. This section is to find out about how those working in this 'death industry' deal with exposure to other people's grief and death in general.

10. Do you find yourself thinking about death – pick answer most applicable.

Very often	Quite often	Often	Not very often	Never
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. Do you think about death mostly.....

Tick all boxes that apply to you

During the funeral you are attending	☐
At work	☐
At home	☐
Other.....	☐

If 'Other' please describe if you are able

.....

.....

.....

.....

12. Do you think about 'Death' in terms of .....

Tick all boxes that apply

The deceased at the funeral	☐
Your own mortality	☐
That of someone close	☐
Other	☐
Rather not say	☐

(12. Cont.) Any further comments

.....

.....

.....

13. For you, what do you feel is the most difficult type of funeral service to work on/attend?

Tick all the boxes that apply

Baby/Infant	☐
Child	☐
Young Person	☐
Young Adult	☐
Middle Aged	☐
Elderly	☐

Can you say why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

14. Do you have 'time out' (a break) in between funerals?

Tick any that apply to you

In the office	Yes	No
Staff room	Yes	No
Crematory	Yes	No
Cemetery	Yes	No
Other	Yes	

If 'Other' Please specify.....

.....

.....

15. Do you talk/offload about work with ……

Tick all that apply to you

Work Colleagues	Yes	No
Other 'Death Workers'	Yes	No
Friends	Yes	No
Family	Yes	No
Rather not say	Yes	

Any further comments.....

.....

.....

16. What in particular helps you to cope after a difficult funeral?

Please tick all that apply regularly.

Sit and have a cup of tea in the staffroom	
Be by myself	
Chat about nothing in particular with colleagues	
Pray formally later – any faith/denomination may apply	
Pray privately	
Keep it all to myself	
Have a joke – gallows humour	
Go to the pub after work	
Other	

(16 cont) If 'Other'

Please comment briefly .....

.....

.....

.....

17. Do you find it hard talking about your feelings after a difficult funeral?

Tick one box that is most applicable to you

Very Hard	Hard	Embarrassing	Easy	Very Easy	Other
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If 'Other' can you explain? ……

.....

.....

18. Which of these would you relate to when you think of death?

Tick all that most apply to you

Denial	☐
Anger	☐
Bargaining	☐
Depression	☐
Acceptance	☐
It happens to all	☐
None Apply	☐

19. Do the following apply for you regularly?

Being able to look on the bright side of life	Yes	No
Enjoying Gallows/Dark Humour	Yes	No

20. Has there been a time where something has made you really 'crack up' with laughter at a funeral?

Often	Yes	No	Never

If 'Yes' can you briefly describe what and how you deal(t)with it .....

.....

…….

21. Has there been a time where something has moved you to tears at a funeral?

Often	Yes	No	Never

If 'Yes' can you briefly describe what and how you deal(t) with it .....

.....

.....

.....

22. Can you briefly describe what helps to give meaning to your work?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

23. Would you consider that any of these words apply to you in your job?

Number the boxes in order of importance leaving out the ones that do not apply.

Religious	☐
Spiritual	☐
Realistic	☐
Depressed	☐
Pragmatic	☐
Fatalist	☐
Thinking	☐
Intuitive	☐
Empathetic	☐
Down-to-Earth	☐
Good Sense of Humour	☐
Passionate	☐
Concerned	☐
Worried	☐
Friendly	☐
Professional	☐
Practical	☐

24. Do you feel that your training ('on the job' or qualification) has equipped you to deal with observing grief on a daily basis?

Yes	No	None	Unsure

If 'None' or 'No' Do you feel that this sort of training would be beneficial? .....

Yes	No	Unsure

24 (cont) If 'No' can you say why?.....

Any further comments you would like to add to the overall study.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

(Please use the reverse of the sheet if you need to say more).

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire – your contribution is appreciated and will provide interesting data for my study.

In addition to this questionnaire, I plan to carry out a small number of interviews. If you feel that you would like to take part in this, please contact me.

APPENDIX 1:3 Finalised Survey used by Respondents

This appendix is a transcript of the electronic Survey Monkey questionnaire.

1. **What is your official Job Title?**

2. **How long have you been working in Crematoriums/Cemeteries?**

3. **Do you have a Job Specific Qualification?**

4. **Does your job entail attending funerals?**

5. **If you attend funerals, do you usually**
   Attend the procession only
   Attend the whole service
   Attend the graveside only
   It varies
   Not applicable

6. **Do you carry out any of the following roles?**
   Sit at the reception desk
   Dig or prepare graves
   Scatter cremated remains
   Operate the cremators
   Not applicable

7. **Please feel free to give a brief description of your duties**

8. **Does your job entail contact with mourners?**

9. **Are you required to wear specific clothing?**

10. **Do you think these clothes help you fulfil your role?**

11. Are you?

Male

Female

12. Are you?

18-30

30-50

50-65

Over 65

13. Do you find yourself thinking about death? – pick the answer most applicable to you.

Very Often

Quite Often

Often

Not very Often

Never

14. If you think about death: Do you think about it mostly

During the funeral you are attending

At work

At Home

Other

Not applicable

15. Do you ever think about 'Death' in terms of: (check all that apply to you)

The deceased at the funeral

Your own mortality

That of someone close

A negative thing

A positive thing

Rather not say

Other: Please specify if you feel able

16. For you, what do you feel is the most difficult type of funeral service to work on/attend?

Baby/infant

Child

Young Person

Young adult

Middle aged person

Elderly

All of them

Rather not say

17. If you witness grieving mourners how does it make you feel?

Sad for them

Uncomfortable

It's not my grief

It reminds me of my own experiences of mourning

Detached

Happy with my own situation in life

18. Do you have 'time out' (a break) in between funerals?

19. If you have 'time out' (a break) in between funerals, where do you spend it? (check all boxes that apply)

In the office

In the staff room

In the cremator room

In the grounds

In the cemetery

Rather not say

Other (please specify)

20. Do you talk/offload about work with: (check all that apply)

Work colleagues

Other 'death workers'

Friends

Family

Never talk about work

Chat on the internet

Rather not say

Other (please specify).

21. What in particular helps you to cope after a difficult funeral?

(Please check all boxes that apply)

Sit and have a cup of tea in the staffroom

Be by myself

Chat about nothing in particular with colleagues

Pray formally later – (any faith/belief/denomination may apply)

Pray privately

Keep it all to myself

Have a joke and a laugh

Enjoy 'dark' or 'gallows humour'

Go to the pub after work

Go for a walk

Other

Rather not say

22. Do you find it hard talking about your feelings after a difficult funeral?

(Check one box that is most applicable to you)

Very hard

Hard

Embarrassing

Easy

Very easy

Rather not say

Other (please explain your response if you feel able to)

23. Which of these emotions would you relate to when you think of death? (check all that apply to you)

Denial

Anger

Bargaining

Depression

Acceptance

It happens to us all

24. Do the following feelings apply for you regularly? (check all that apply)

Being able to look on the bright side of life

Enjoying 'Gallows' or 'Dark' humour

Usually gloomy

Do not enjoy jokes about death

Enthusiasm for work

Not enjoying work

None of these apply

25. Has there been a time where something has made you really 'crack up' with laughter at a funeral?

Often

Yes

No

Never

26. Has there been a time where something has moved you to tears at a funeral?

Often

Yes

No

Never

27. If you attend multiple funerals during the working day, does the grief of the mourners and the intensity of the atmosphere affect you in any particular way, or is it just 'work'. (Qualitative answers)

28. Do you feel that your training (‘on the job’ or by qualification) has equipped you to deal with observing other peoples grief on a daily basis?

Yes

No

Unsure

29. Do you feel that some form of training in death related grief would be beneficial to you?

Yes

No

Not applicable to me

30. What form of training would benefit you most do you think? (If you answered Not applicable to the last question, please put N/A in the comment box)

In House day/evening training session

Correspondence/distance learning short course

Informal 'offloading sessions' with other staff

Informal 'offloading sessions' with a counsellor

Formal qualification

Other

31. Do you have a personal religion, belief or spiritual pathway?

Yes

No

Sometimes

Never

Don’t Know

Rather not say

32. Do you believe in life after death?

Yes

No

Don’t know

Rather not say

33. Does this belief or lack of it help you come to terms with other peoples’ death?

Yes

No

Don’t know

Other (Please specify)

34. Does this belief or lack of it help you come to terms with your own death?

Yes

No

Don’t know

Other (Please specify)

35. Please say what you thought about this survey.

Hard to understand

Boring

Thought provoking

Interesting

Challenging

Upsetting

Useful

Fun

APPENDIX 1:4a Participant Information Sheet

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: Digging Deep: discovering coping strategies for people working in crematoria and allied cemeteries.

Researcher: Marianne Angela McLachlan (Angie)

Invitation
You are being invited to take part in a survey for a postgraduate research project. Before you decide to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

This study has been designed as part of my dissertation for qualification in MA: The Rhetoric and Rituals of Death at The University of Winchester. My study is entitled - *Digging Deep: Investigating Transcendent and Immanent Coping Strategies Against Other Peoples Grief, in Crematoria and Cemetery Workers in Southern England*.

I have a BA (Hons.), in Death Loss and Palliative Care from The University of Portsmouth where I studied workers in Nursing Homes who cared for dying residents. I am a qualified embalmer, member of the BIE and EAE and have been a funeral 'insider' for nineteen years, over which time I have attended countless funerals at crematoria and cemeteries in various capacities - funeral-assistant; bearer; embalmer; hearse/limousine driver; Funeral Director or personally as a mourner. I have, in addition, occasionally filled in graves, dug many ashes plots and held lowering webs of coffins and caskets.

Purpose of Project
To investigate coping strategies in workers at Crematoria and allied Cemeteries in the UK, with the aim of learning a little more about working in situations where there is a daily encounter with death and second hand grief. The study will be instrumental in designing further research into the way in which workers in the 'death industry' cope with death on a daily basis.

Do I have to take part?
Participation is entirely voluntary, if you work in a crematorium or cemetery – in any capacity, you are likely to have direct experience and knowledge of the subject being studied and so might be able to provide some valuable information that would enhance the project.
If you do decide to take part, this information sheet can be downloaded for you to keep consent to enter into the project is in the act of completing the electronic survey.

What will happen to me if I take part?
You will be asked to fill in an electronic survey – which may take about 30 minutes. You may then wish to follow this up by contacting us and offering to be interviewed; however only a limited number of these will take place due to time restrictions.

Further information
Should you wish any further information or advice about the project, the contact details of the Program leader are given on the consent document and within the electronic survey. Please feel free to ask questions.

Will my participation be kept confidential?
Yes. The questionnaire is anonymous and you will not be able to be identified with your responses. Any data will be stored and retained in accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act.

What will happen to the results of the research project?
The research will form part of a postgraduate research thesis and may be presented as an academic paper. The finished thesis will be kept at The University of Winchester and will be in the public domain however, all information you supply will be confidential and anonymous.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The research is being organised by the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Winchester. The research is not funded. Although the survey is being launched on the ICCM website and through the Society of Crematorium Organists, it is independent of both organisations and therefore please feel free to pass the link to other colleagues within the sector who you feel may be interested.

Contact for further information, including questions about the research and participants' rights:
Programme Leader MA: Religion (Rhetoric & Rituals of Death):
Dr Christina Welch
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Winchester
SO22 4NR
christina.welch@winchester.ac.uk

01962 827521

APPENDIX 1:4b Participant Consent Form

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Digging Deep: Investigating transcendent and immanent coping strategies - against other people's grief - in crematoria and cemetery workers from Southern England.

Researcher: Marianne Angela McLachlan (Angie)

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a postgraduate research project.

Before you decide to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the information sheet carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

Activity Consent
I understand that I have given my consent to undertake a questionnaire regarding the above project.

Data consent
I understand that my responses will be entirely anonymous and that I will not be able to be identified from my responses. My responses will form part of a postgraduate research thesis.

Statements of understanding
I have read the information leaflet about the research project which I have been asked to take part in and have been given a copy of the information leaflet to keep.

Why the research is being conducted has been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions.

Right of withdrawal
Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without disadvantage to myself and without having to give any reason.

Statement of Consent
I hereby fully and freely consent to participation in the study which has been fully explained to me.

Participant's Name_____ Researcher's Name_____

Participant's Signature_____ Researcher's Signature_____

Date_____ Date_____

Contact Details

Chair of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Sub-Committee at the University of Winchester:

Dr Nick Thorpe
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Winchester
West Hill
Winchester
SO22 4NR

nick.thorpe@winchester.ac.uk

01962 841515

Programme Leader MA: Religion (Rhetoric & Rituals of Death):

Dr Christina Welch
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Winchester
West Hill
Winchester
SO22 4NR

christina.welch@winchester.ac.uk

01962 827521

For questions relating to the University's Data Protection policy please contact the University's Data Protection Officer:

Mr David Farley
Martial Rose Library
University of Winchester
West Hill
Winchester
S022 4NR

David.farley@winchester.ac.uk

01962 827229

APPENDIX 2

Question: 1

1. What is your official Job Title?

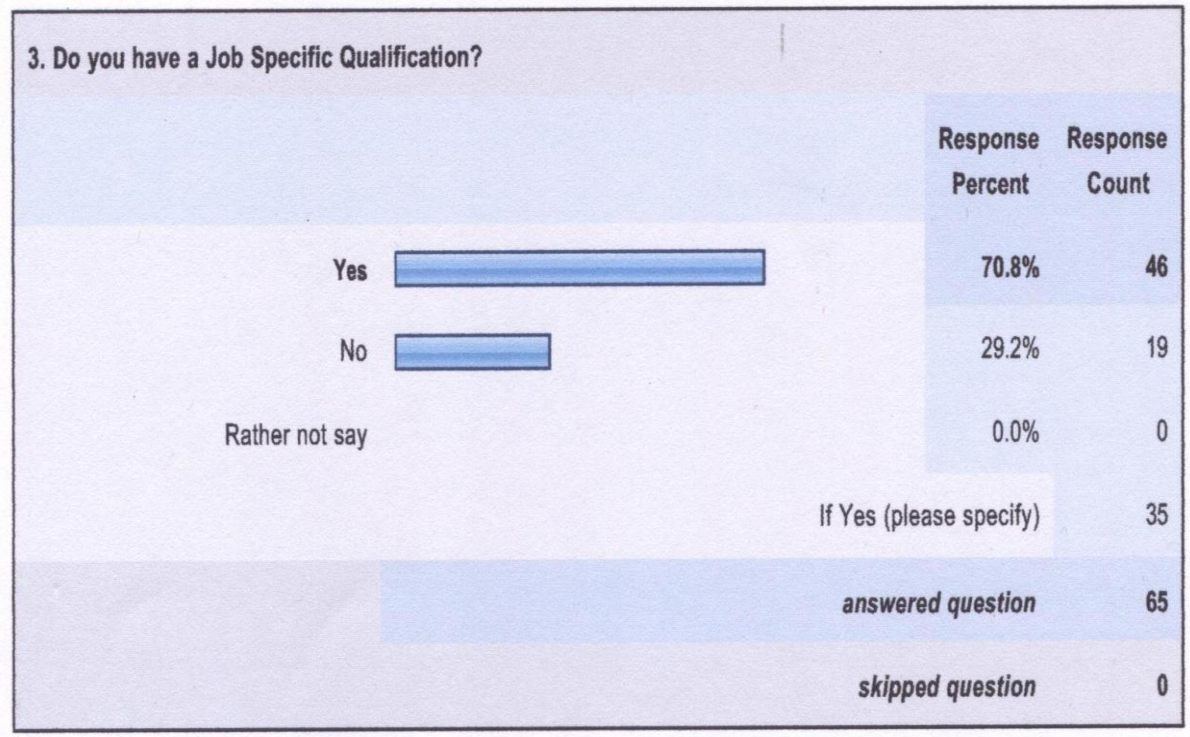
	Response Percent	Response Count
Superintendent	18.5%	12
Administration	10.8%	7
Crematorium Chapel Attendant	3.1%	2
Cremator Operator	3.1%	2
Groundsman/Gravedigger	4.6%	3
Organist	10.8%	7
Clergy/Celebrant	13.8%	9
Other (please specify)	**43.1%**	**28**
answered question		65
skipped question		0

Question: 2

2. How long have you been working in Crematoriums/Cemeteries?

	Response Percent	Response Count
1-5 years	**32.3%**	**21**
5-10 years	23.1%	15
10-15 years	12.3%	8
15-20 years	7.7%	5
over 20 years	23.1%	15
Rather not say	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	1.5%	1
answered question		65
skipped question		0

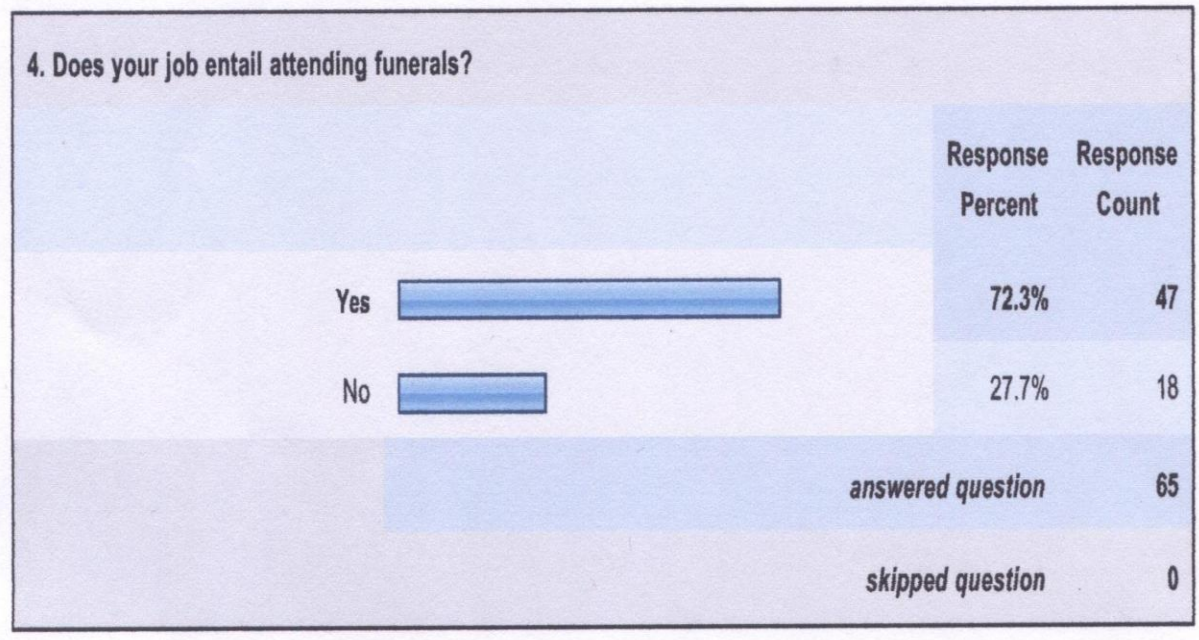
Question: 3



3. Do you have a Job Specific Qualification?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	70.8%	46
No	29.2%	19
Rather not say	0.0%	0
If Yes (please specify)		35
answered question		65
skipped question		0

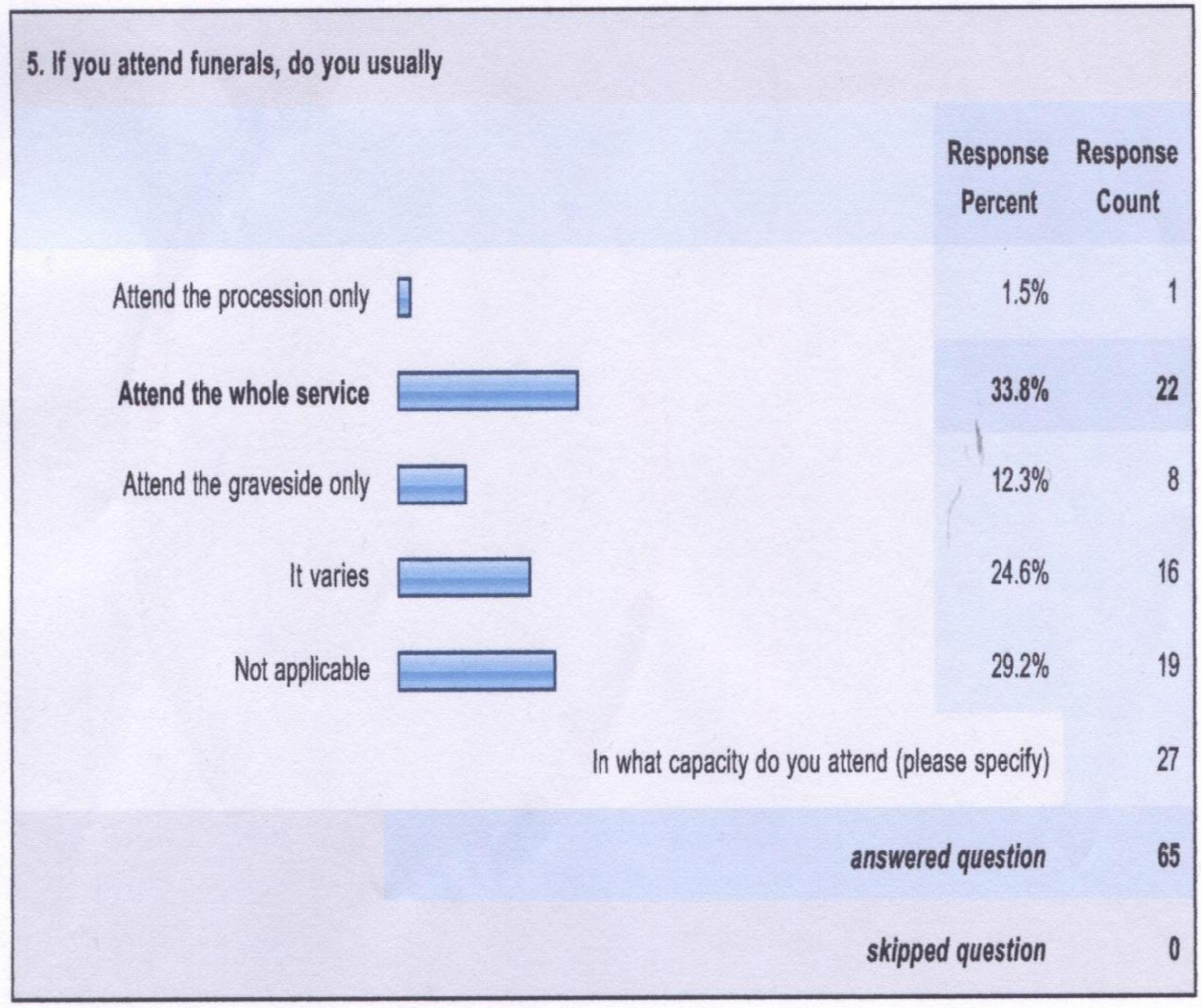
Question: 4



4. Does your job entail attending funerals?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	72.3%	47
No	27.7%	18
answered question		65
skipped question		0

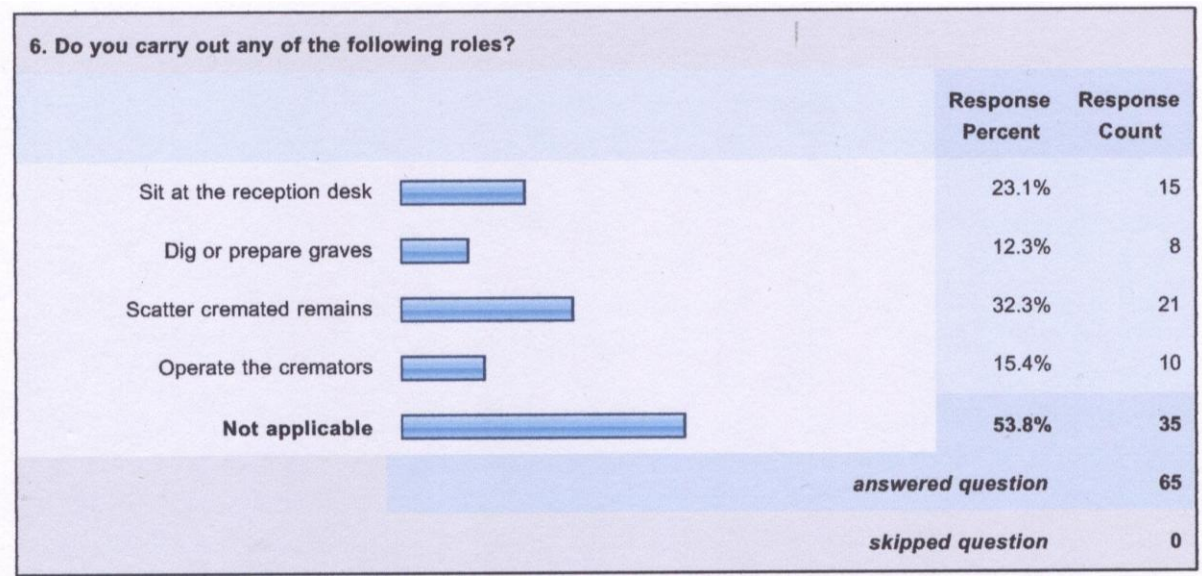
Question: 5



5. If you attend funerals, do you usually

	Response Percent	Response Count
Attend the procession only	1.5%	1
Attend the whole service	**33.8%**	**22**
Attend the graveside only	12.3%	8
It varies	24.6%	16
Not applicable	29.2%	19
In what capacity do you attend (please specify)		27
answered question		65
skipped question		0

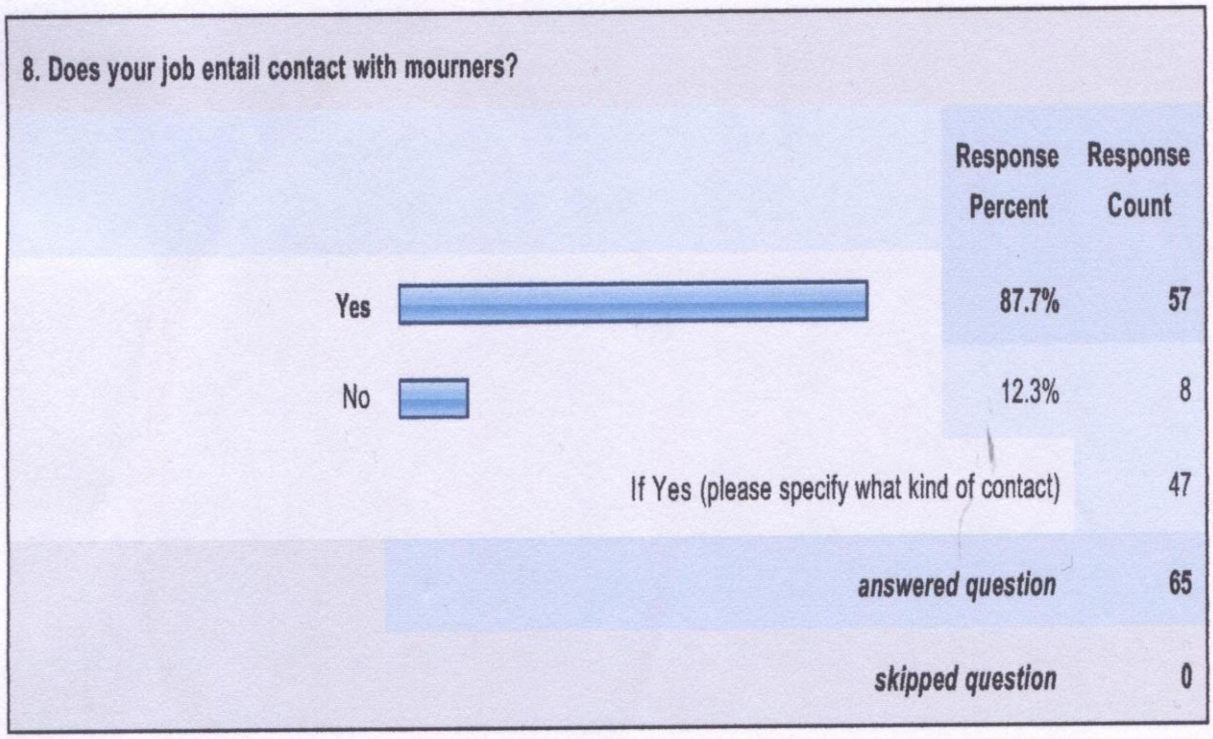
Question: 6



6. Do you carry out any of the following roles?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Sit at the reception desk	23.1%	15
Dig or prepare graves	12.3%	8
Scatter cremated remains	32.3%	21
Operate the cremators	15.4%	10
Not applicable	**53.8%**	**35**
answered question		65
skipped question		0

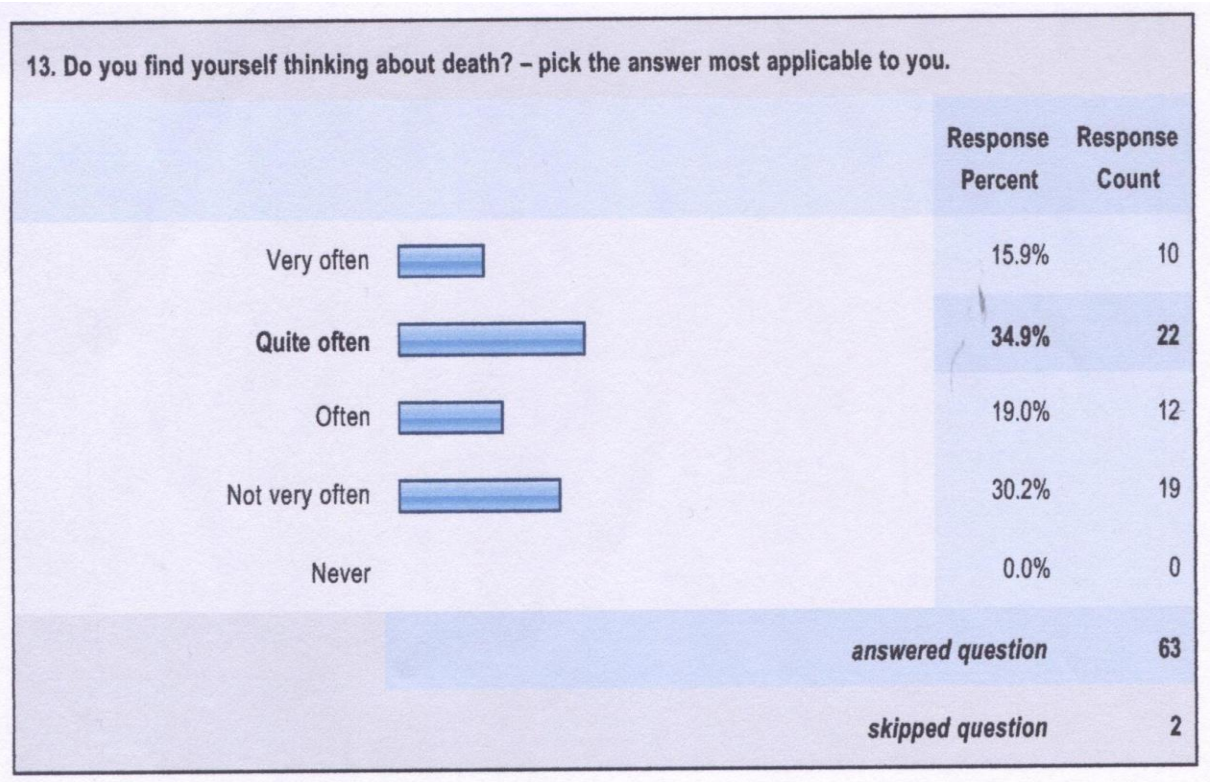
Question: 8



8. Does your job entail contact with mourners?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	87.7%	57
No	12.3%	8
If Yes (please specify what kind of contact)		47
answered question		65
skipped question		0

Question: 13



13. Do you find yourself thinking about death? – pick the answer most applicable to you.

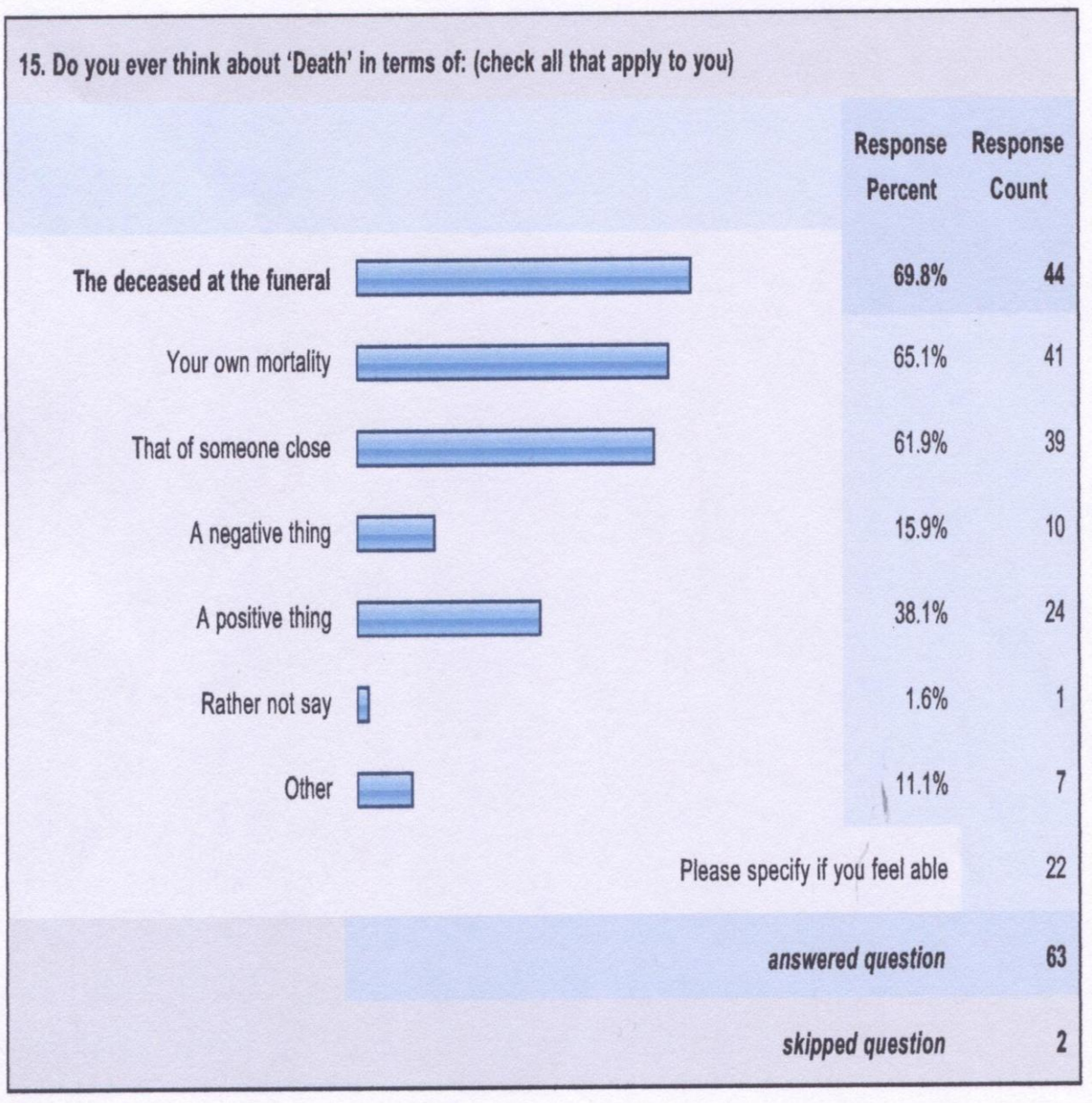
	Response Percent	Response Count
Very often	15.9%	10
Quite often	**34.9%**	**22**
Often	19.0%	12
Not very often	30.2%	19
Never	0.0%	0
answered question		63
skipped question		2

Question: 14

14. If you think about death: Do you think about it mostly

	Response Percent	Response Count
During the funeral you are attending	34.9%	22
At work	**50.8%**	**32**
At Home	31.7%	20
Other	22.2%	14
Not applicable	1.6%	1
Other (please specify if you feel able)		17
answered question		**63**
skipped question		**2**

Question: 15



15. Do you ever think about 'Death' in terms of: (check all that apply to you)

	Response Percent	Response Count
The deceased at the funeral	**69.8%**	**44**
Your own mortality	65.1%	41
That of someone close	61.9%	39
A negative thing	15.9%	10
A positive thing	38.1%	24
Rather not say	1.6%	1
Other	11.1%	7
Please specify if you feel able		22
answered question		63
skipped question		2

Question: 16

16. For you, what do you feel is the most difficult type of funeral service to work on/attend?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Baby/infant	9.5%	6
Child	**34.9%**	**22**
Young Person	15.9%	10
Young adult	6.3%	4
Middle aged person	1.6%	1
Elderly	4.8%	3
All of them	20.6%	13
Rather not say	6.3%	4
Any comments you would like to add about why you feel this:		32
answered question		**63**
skipped question		**2**

Question: 17

17. If you witness grieving mourners how does it make you feel?

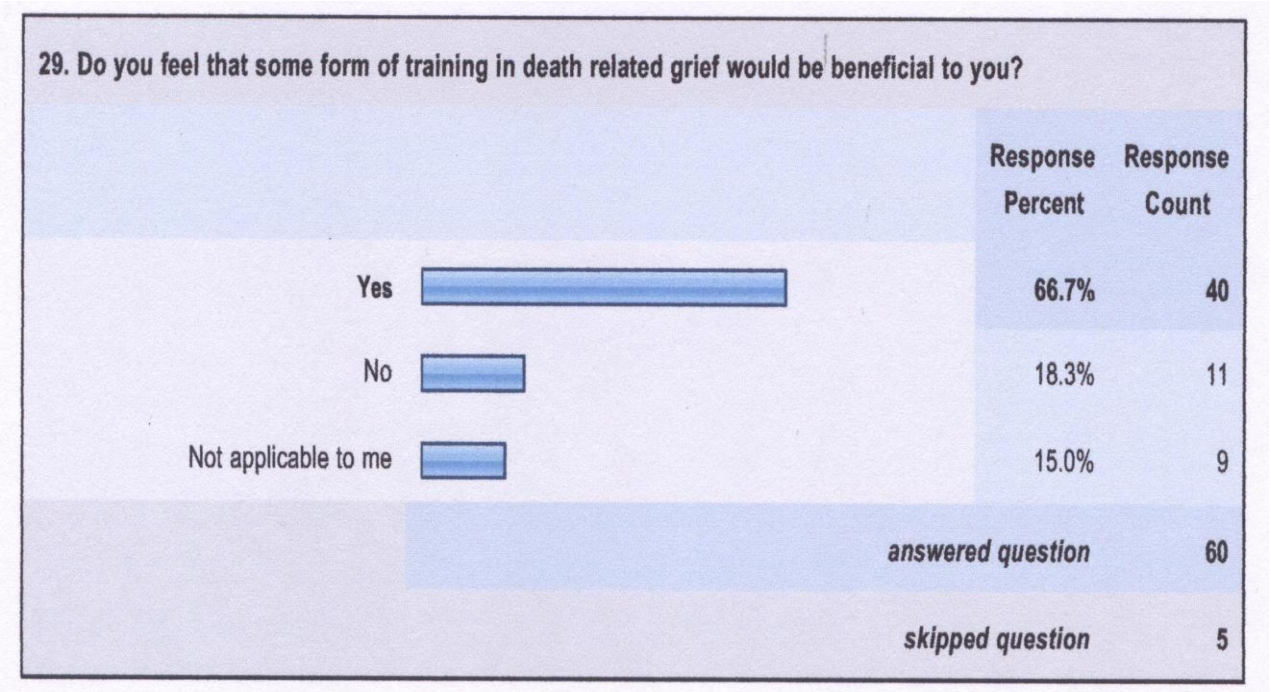
	strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Response Count
Sad for them	31.7% (19)	**48.3% (29)**	15.0% (9)	3.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.7% (1)	60
Uncomfortable	1.8% (1)	16.4% (9)	**30.9% (17)**	21.8% (12)	27.3% (15)	1.8% (1)	55
Its not my grief	1.8% (1)	31.6% (18)	**35.1% (20)**	19.3% (11)	10.5% (6)	1.8% (1)	57
It reminds me of my own experiences of mourning	8.8% (5)	**40.4% (23)**	31.6% (18)	15.8% (9)	0.0% (0)	3.5% (2)	57
Detached	3.5% (2)	21.1% (12)	28.1% (16)	**35.1% (20)**	10.5% (6)	1.8% (1)	57
Happy with my own situation in life	5.4% (3)	33.9% (19)	**44.6% (25)**	8.9% (5)	3.6% (2)	3.6% (2)	56
					answered question		63
					skipped question		2

Question: 28

28. Do you feel that your training ('on the job' or by qualification) has equipped you to deal with observing other peoples grief on a daily basis?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	**70.0%**	**42**
No	18.3%	11
Unsure	11.7%	7
answered question		60
skipped question		5

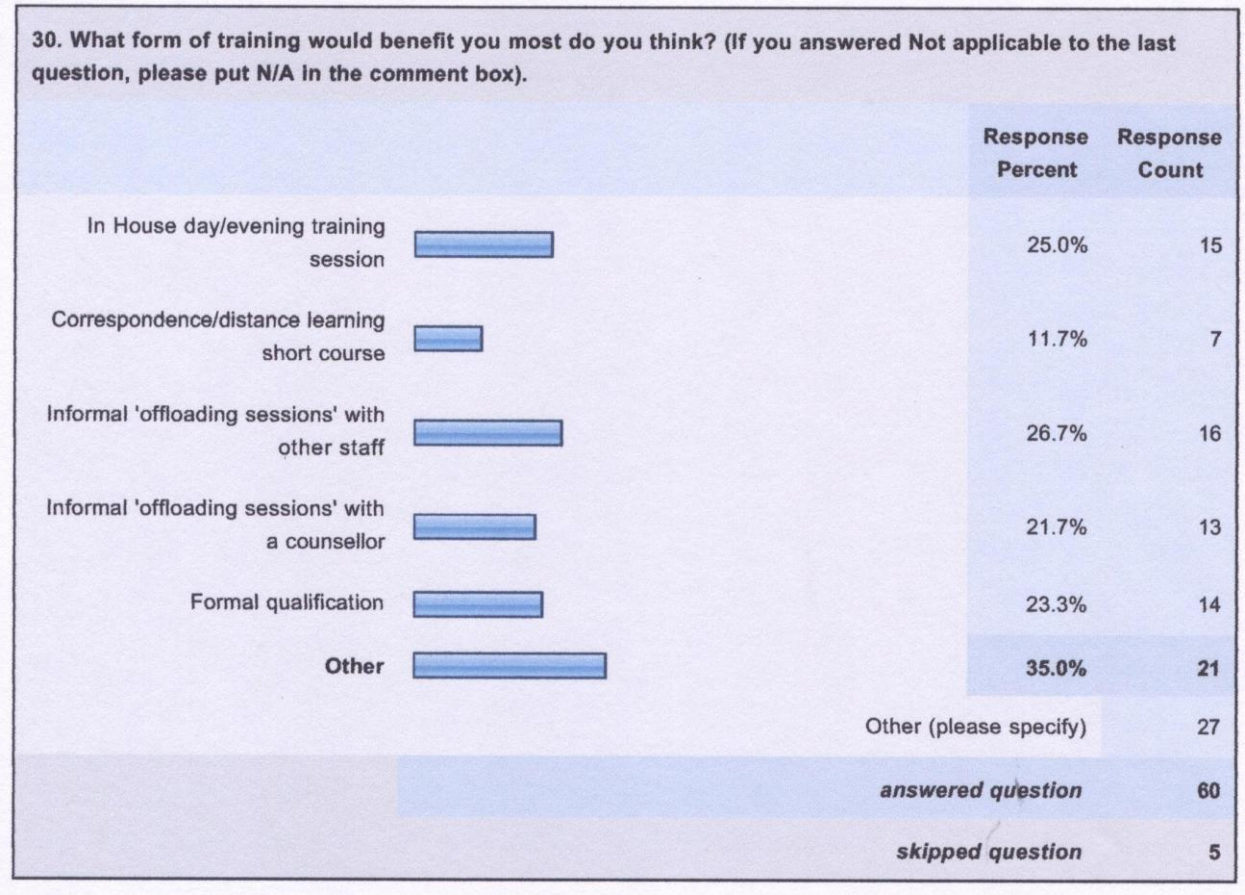
Question: 29



29. Do you feel that some form of training in death related grief would be beneficial to you?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	66.7%	40
No	18.3%	11
Not applicable to me	15.0%	9
answered question		60
skipped question		5

Question: 30

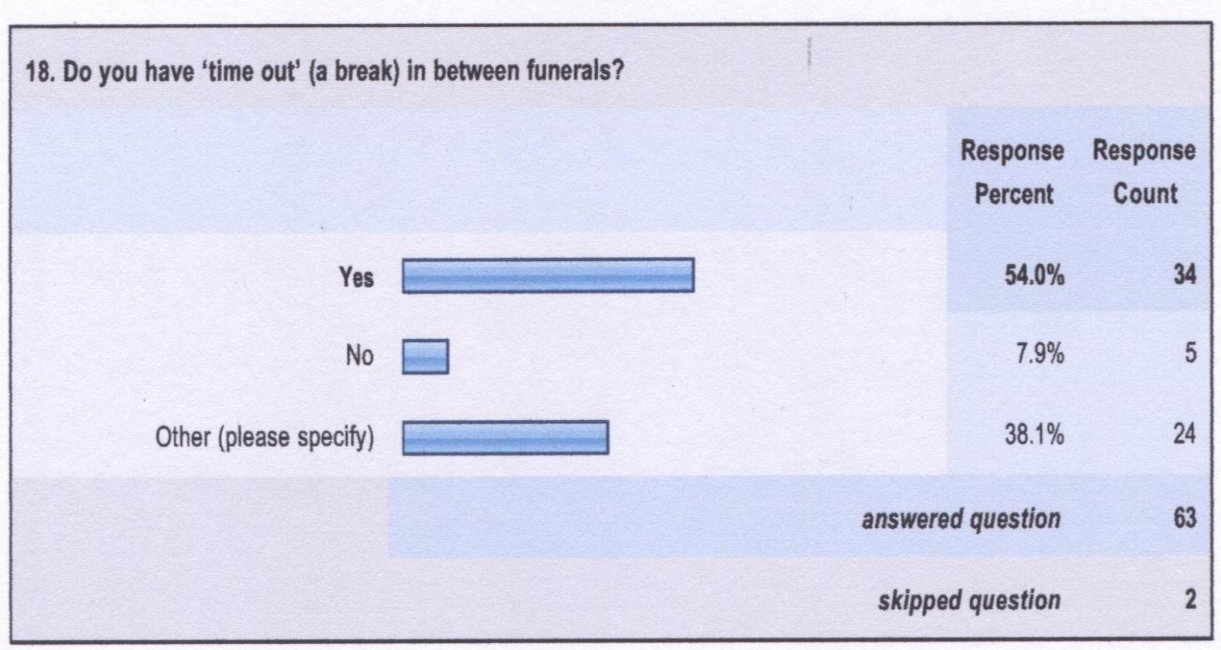


30. What form of training would benefit you most do you think? (If you answered Not applicable to the last question, please put N/A in the comment box).

	Response Percent	Response Count
In House day/evening training session	25.0%	15
Correspondence/distance learning short course	11.7%	7
Informal 'offloading sessions' with other staff	26.7%	16
Informal 'offloading sessions' with a counsellor	21.7%	13
Formal qualification	23.3%	14
Other	**35.0%**	**21**
Other (please specify)		27
answered question		60
skipped question		5

APPENDIX 3

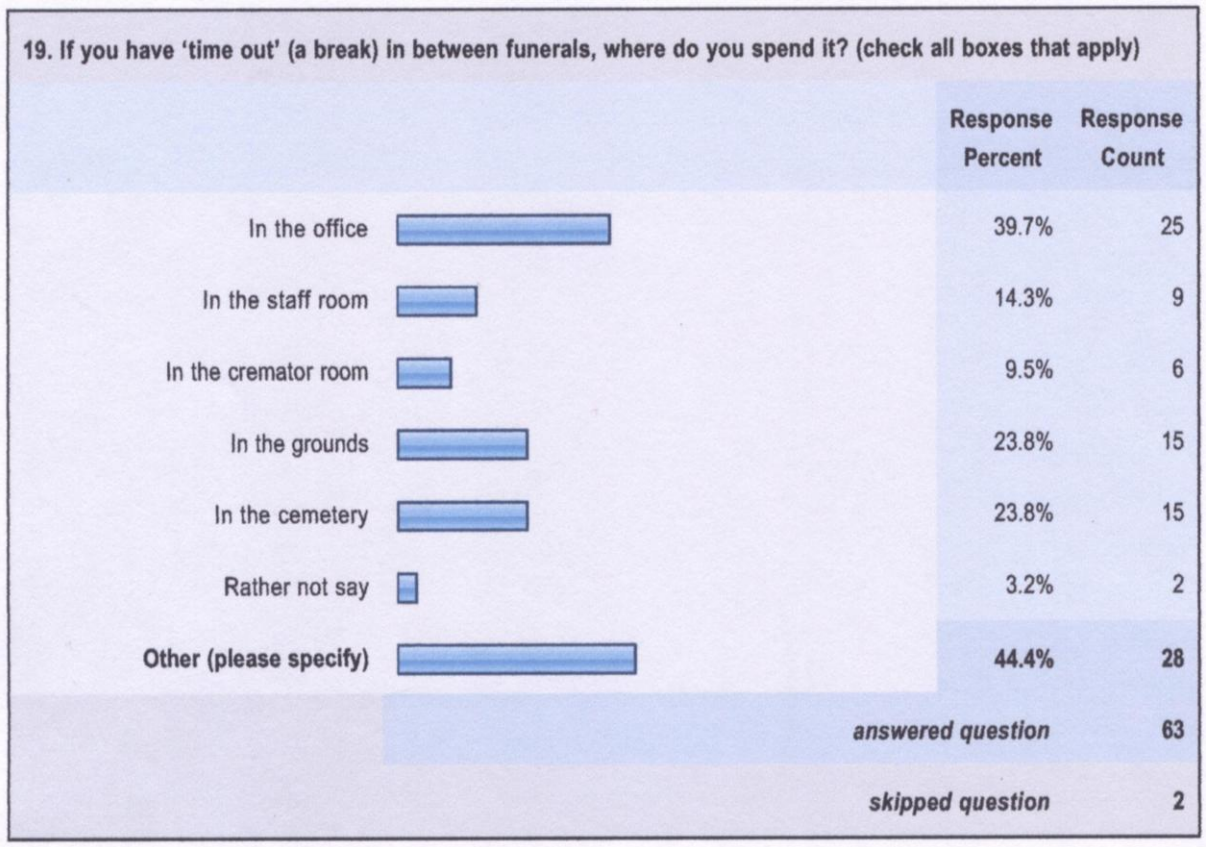
Question: 18



18. Do you have 'time out' (a break) in between funerals?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	54.0%	34
No	7.9%	5
Other (please specify)	38.1%	24
answered question		63
skipped question		2

Question: 19



19. If you have 'time out' (a break) in between funerals, where do you spend it? (check all boxes that apply)

	Response Percent	Response Count
In the office	39.7%	25
In the staff room	14.3%	9
In the cremator room	9.5%	6
In the grounds	23.8%	15
In the cemetery	23.8%	15
Rather not say	3.2%	2
Other (please specify)	44.4%	28
answered question		63
skipped question		2

Question: 20

20. Do you talk/offload about work with: (check all that apply)

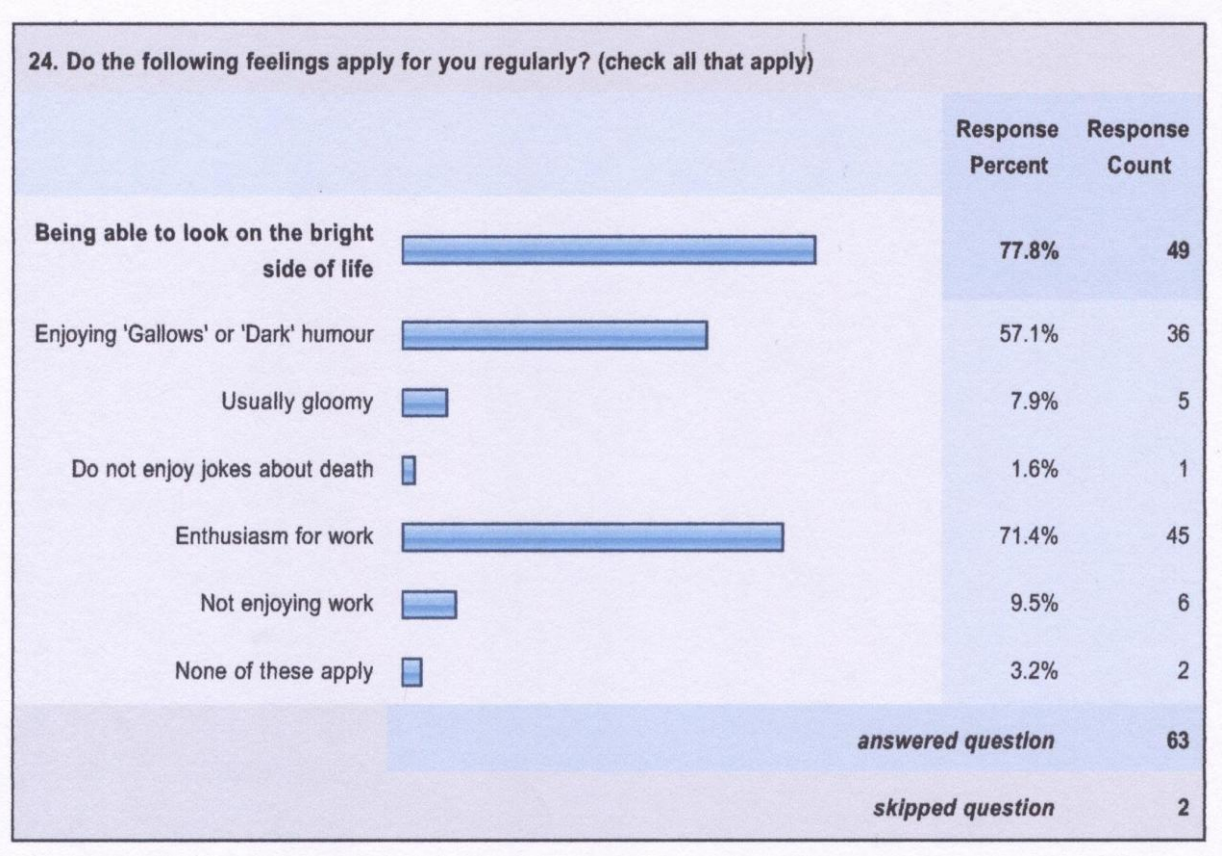
	Response Percent	Response Count
Work colleagues	**74.6%**	**47**
Other 'death workers'	47.6%	30
Friends	31.7%	20
Family	57.1%	36
Never talk about work	7.9%	5
Chat on the internet	6.3%	4
Rather not say	1.6%	1
Other (please specify).	15.9%	10
answered question		**63**
skipped question		**2**

Question: 21

21. What in particular helps you to cope after a difficult funeral? (Please check all boxes that apply)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Sit and have a cup of tea in the staffroom	14.3%	9
Be by myself	22.2%	14
Chat about nothing in particular with colleagues	36.5%	23
Pray formally later – (any faith/belief/denomination may apply)	1.6%	1
Pray privately	6.3%	4
Keep it all to myself	9.5%	6
Have a joke and a laugh	28.6%	18
Enjoy 'dark' or 'gallows humour'	**39.7%**	**25**
Go to the pub after work	3.2%	2
Go for a walk	25.4%	16
Other	22.2%	14
Rather not say	1.6%	1
Please explain this response, if you feel able to.		28
answered question		**63**
skipped question		**2**

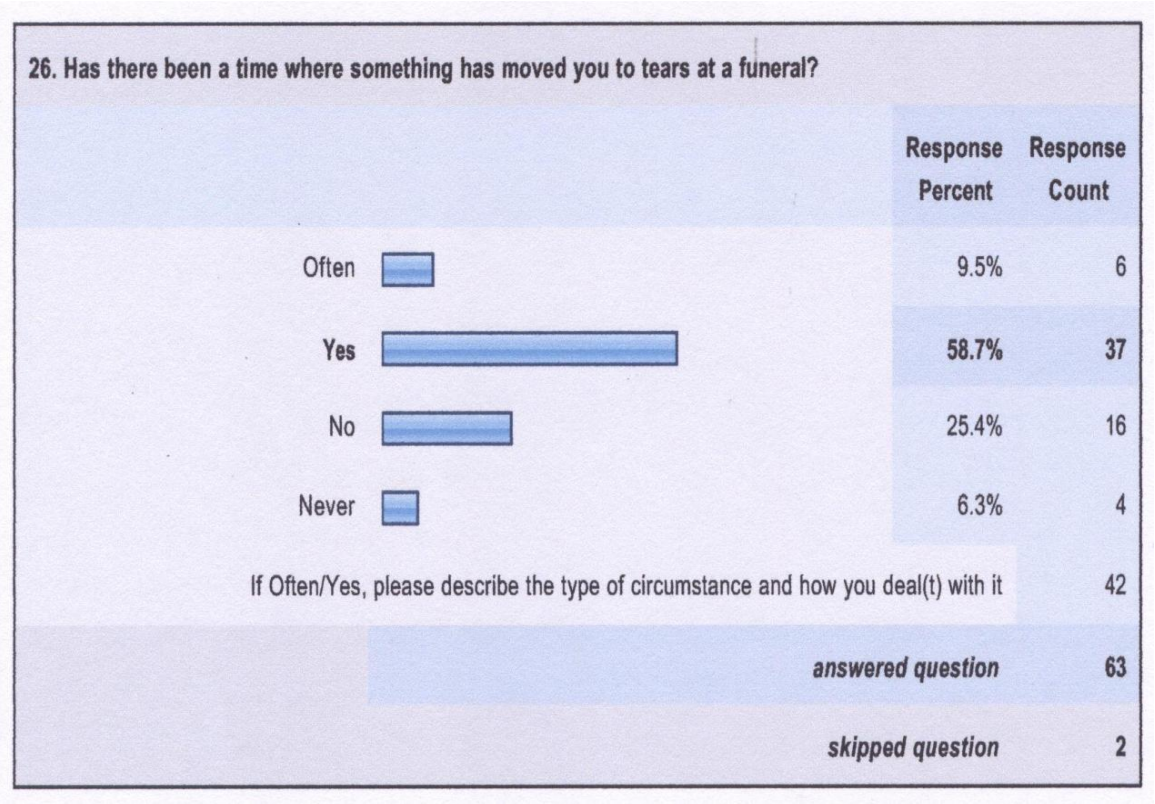
Question: 24



24. Do the following feelings apply for you regularly? (check all that apply)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Being able to look on the bright side of life	**77.8%**	**49**
Enjoying 'Gallows' or 'Dark' humour	57.1%	36
Usually gloomy	7.9%	5
Do not enjoy jokes about death	1.6%	1
Enthusiasm for work	71.4%	45
Not enjoying work	9.5%	6
None of these apply	3.2%	2
answered question		63
skipped question		2

Question: 26



26. Has there been a time where something has moved you to tears at a funeral?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Often	9.5%	6
Yes	**58.7%**	**37**
No	25.4%	16
Never	6.3%	4
If Often/Yes, please describe the type of circumstance and how you deal(t) with it		42
answered question		63
skipped question		2

Question: 31

31. Do you have a personal religion, belief or spiritual pathway?

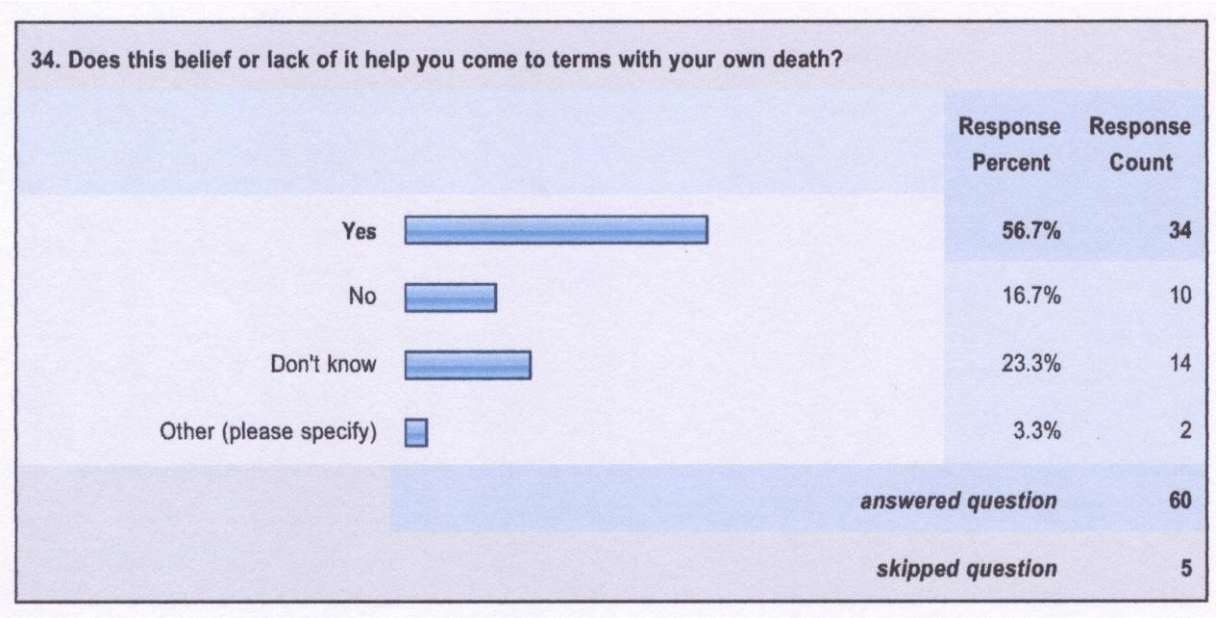
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	40.0%	24
No	31.7%	19
Sometimes	18.3%	11
Never	1.7%	1
Don't know	5.0%	3
Rather not say	3.3%	2
Please state which religion/spiritual pathway if you wish.		16
answered question		60
skipped question		5

Question: 33

33. Does this belief or lack of it help you come to terms with other peoples death?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	53.3%	32
No	18.3%	11
Don't know	21.7%	13
Other (please specify)	6.7%	4
answered question		60
skipped question		5

Question: 34



34. Does this belief or lack of it help you come to terms with your own death?

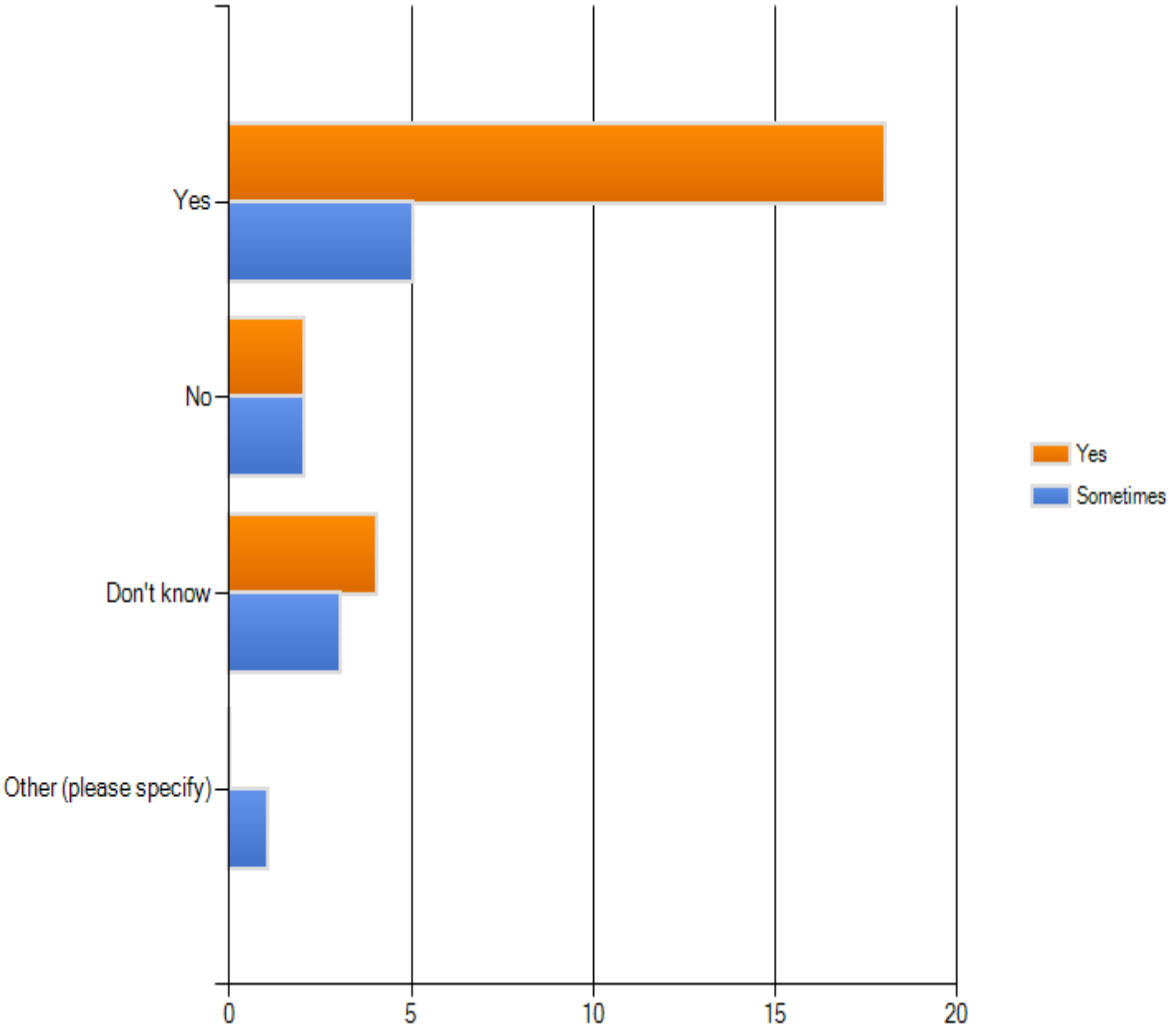
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	56.7%	34
No	16.7%	10
Don't know	23.3%	14
Other (please specify)	3.3%	2
answered question		60
skipped question		5

APPENDIX 3:1 Graph a, Graph b, Graph c & Graph d

GRAPH a

Cross-tab of results from respondent's who had a spiritual pathway/belief in response to Question 33.

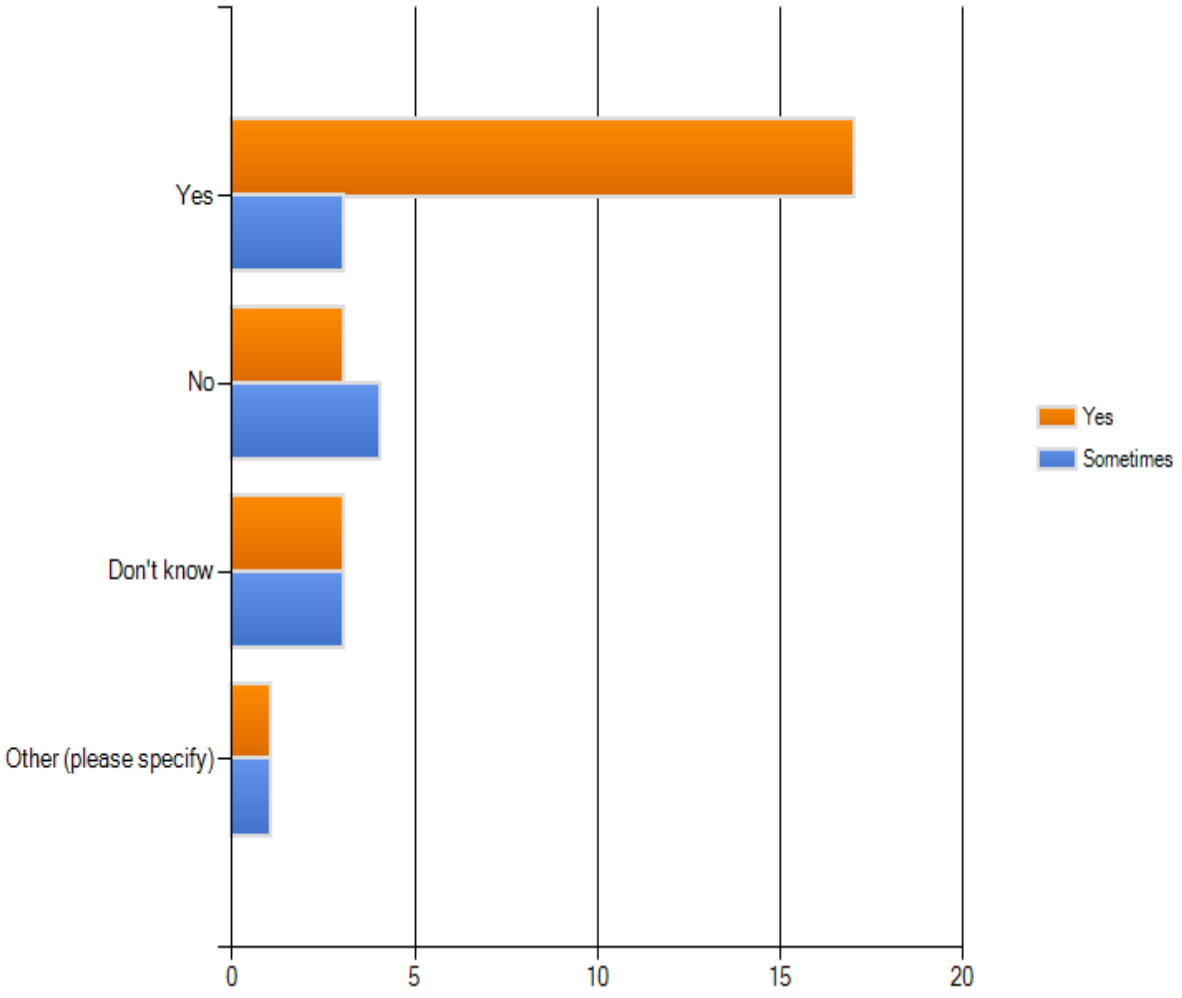
Does this belief help you to come to terms with your own eventual death?



GRAPH b

Cross-tab of results from respondent's who had a spiritual pathway/belief in response to Question 33.

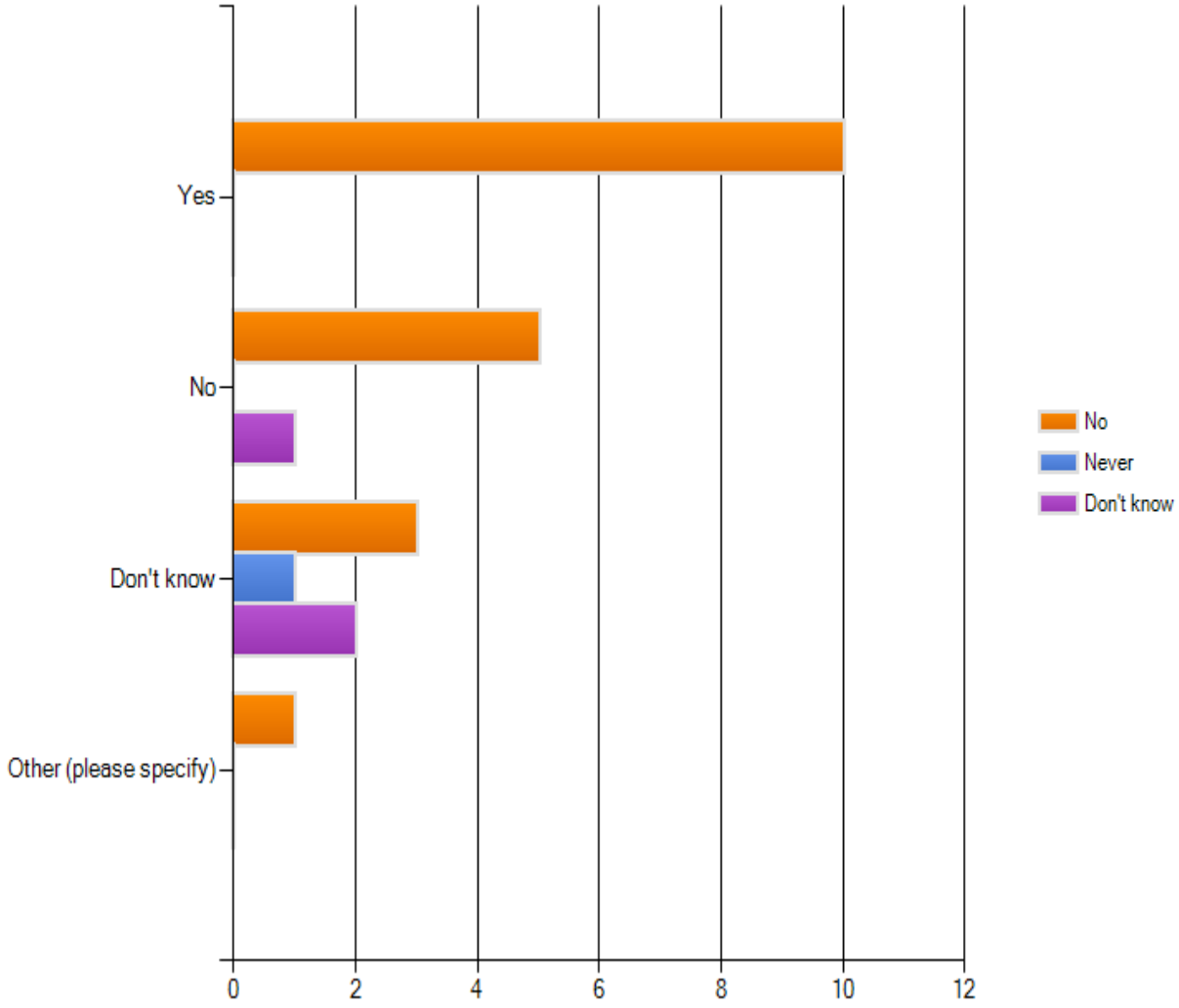
Does this belief help you to come to terms with other peoples' death?



GRAPH c

Cross-tab results from respondent's who had no spiritual pathway/belief in response to Question 33.

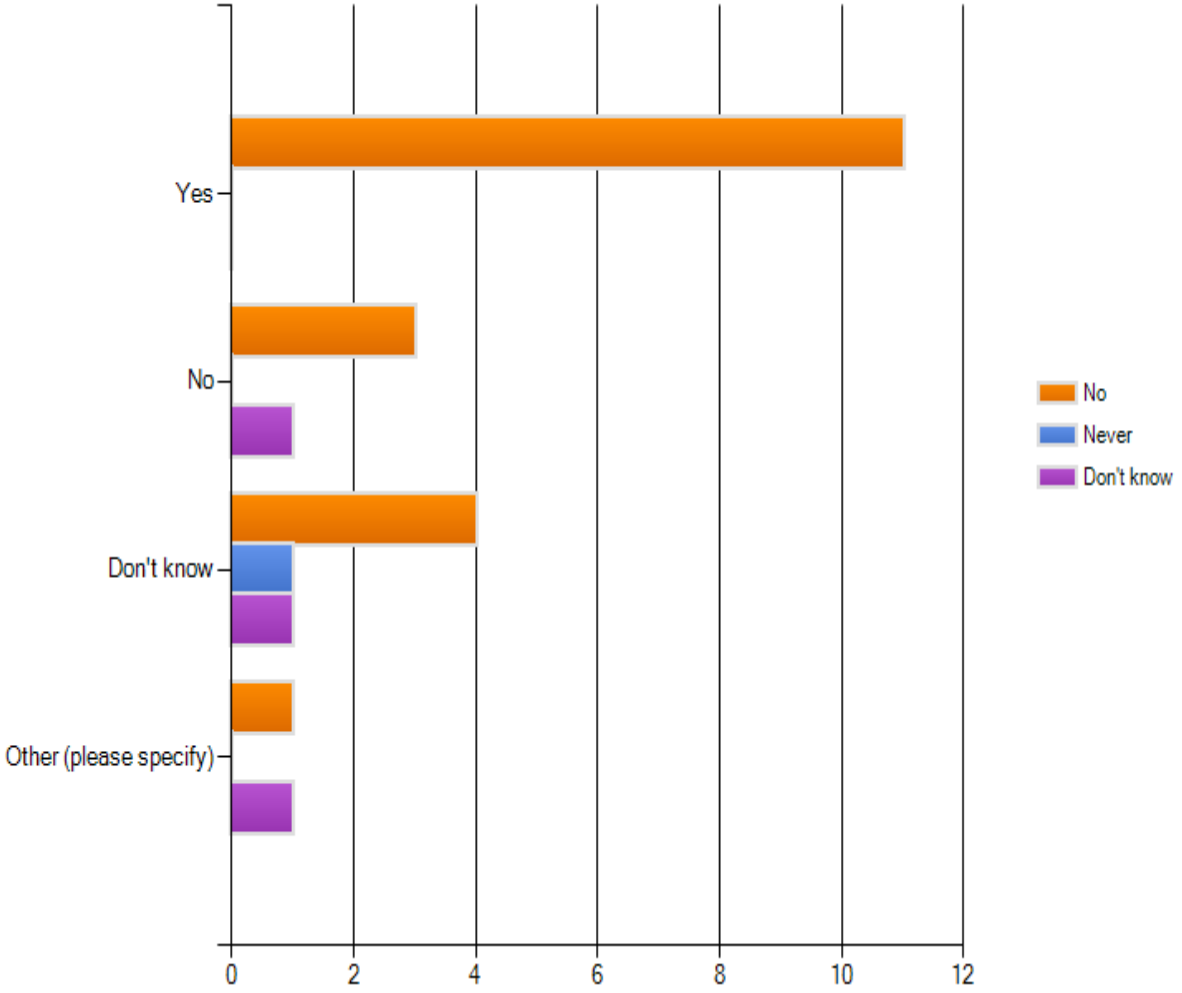
Does this lack of belief help you to come to terms with your own eventual death?



GRAPH d

Cross-tab results from respondent's who had no spiritual pathway/belief in response to Question 33.

Does this lack of belief help you to come to terms with other people's death?



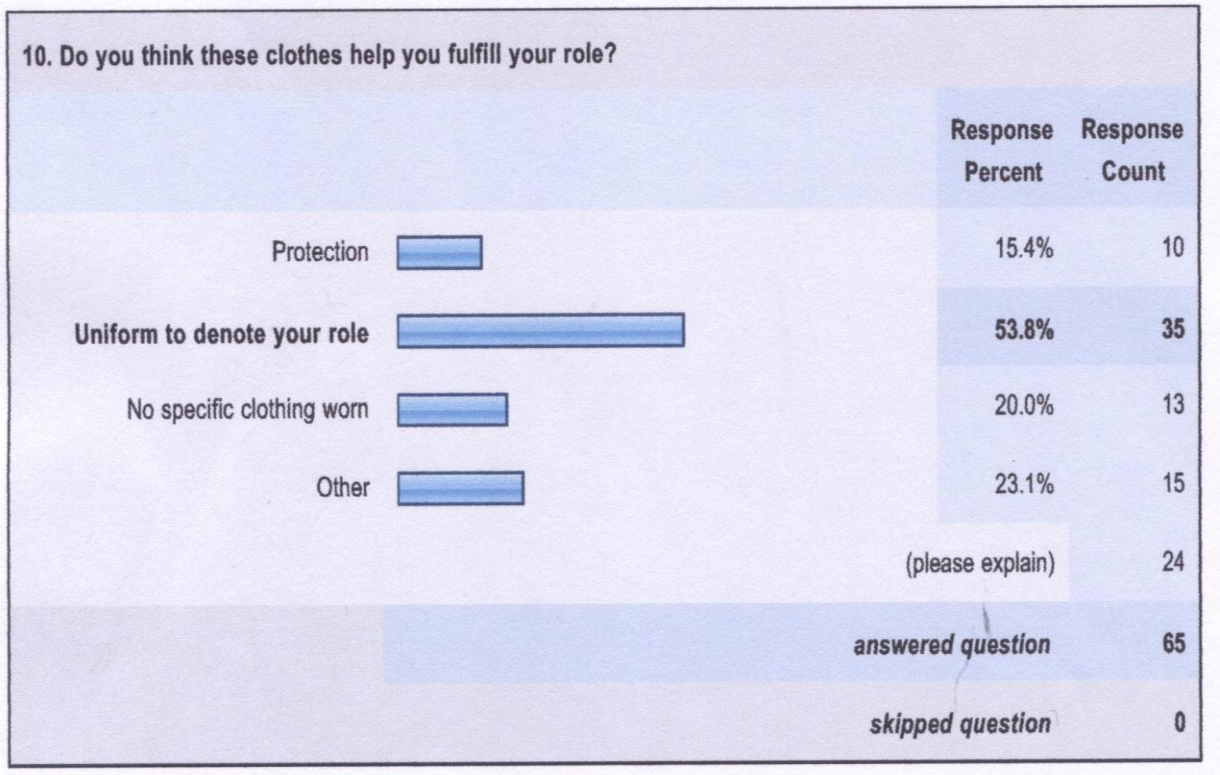
APPENDIX 4

Question: 9

9. Are you required to wear specific clothing?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Pinstripe Trousers/skirt	4.6%	3
Clerical/Academic/	6.2%	4
Ecclesiastical	6.2%	4
Frock Coat	1.5%	1
Smart Suit	**46.2%**	**30**
Overalls/Protective Equipment	15.4%	10
No specific clothing	23.1%	15
Other (please specify)	27.7%	18
answered question		65
skipped question		0

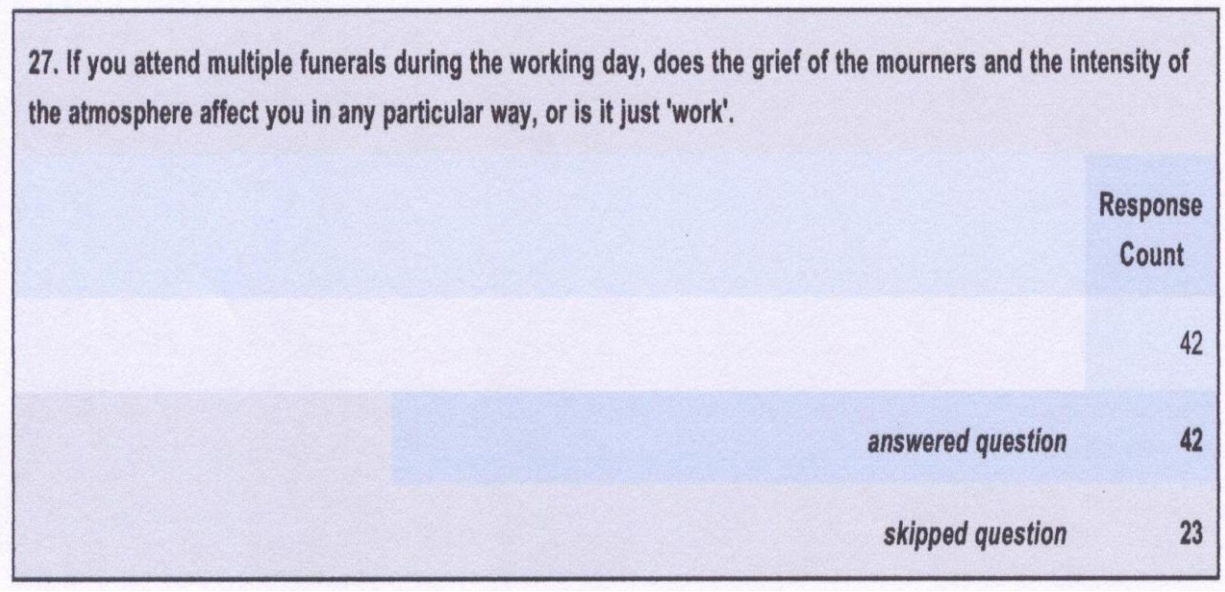
Question: 10



10. Do you think these clothes help you fulfill your role?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Protection	15.4%	10
Uniform to denote your role	**53.8%**	**35**
No specific clothing worn	20.0%	13
Other	23.1%	15
(please explain)		24
answered question		65
skipped question		0

Question: 27



27. If you attend multiple funerals during the working day, does the grief of the mourners and the intensity of the atmosphere affect you in any particular way, or is it just 'work'.

	Response Count
	42
answered question	42
skipped question	23

Question: 24

24. Do the following feelings apply for you regularly? (check all that apply)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Being able to look on the bright side of life	**77.8%**	**49**
Enjoying 'Gallows' or 'Dark' humour	57.1%	36
Usually gloomy	7.9%	5
Do not enjoy jokes about death	1.6%	1
Enthusiasm for work	71.4%	45
Not enjoying work	9.5%	6
None of these apply	3.2%	2
answered question		63
skipped question		2

APPENDIX 5

Question: 25

25. Has there been a time where something has made you really 'crack up' with laughter at a funeral?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Often	7.9%	5
Yes	34.9%	22
No	**52.4%**	**33**
Never	4.8%	3
If Often/Yes please describe the type of situation and how you deal(t) with it.		24
answered question		63
skipped question		2

Question: 26

26. Has there been a time where something has moved you to tears at a funeral?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Often	9.5%	6
Yes	58.7%	37
No	25.4%	16
Never	6.3%	4
If Often/Yes, please describe the type of circumstance and how you deal(t) with it		42
answered question		63
skipped question		2

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