

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF AN ALTERNATIVE FUNERAL PLAN

by

ROBERT REECE WILLIAMS

B.A., Washburn University, 1973

A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1975

Approved by:

M. Lacey Bergen

Major Professor

LD
2668
T4
1975
W54
C.2
Document

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer expresses deep gratitude to Dr. M. Betsy Bergen, who served as his major professor, for her counsel, advice, and encouragement in this project. The valuable suggestions of Dr. Marjorie Stith, Head of the Department of Family and Child Development, the interest of Dr. C. E. Kennedy and Joan McNeil are gratefully acknowledged. The writer would also like to express his gratitude to Reverend Melvin Schmidt and the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Congregation for their participation in this project. A special recognition is extended to Carol Williams for her encouragement, loving support, and financial assistance.

ILLEGIBLE DOCUMENT

**THE FOLLOWING
DOCUMENT(S) IS OF
POOR LEGIBILITY IN
THE ORIGINAL**

**THIS IS THE BEST
COPY AVAILABLE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iv
--------------------------	----

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	7
Definition of Terms.	8
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	9
Attitudes Toward Death	9
Attitudes Toward Grief and Funerals.	16
Summary	20
3. METHODS AND PROCEDURES	24
Measuring Instrument	24
Method of Administration	25
Analysis of Data	26
4. RESULTS	27
Respondents Analysis	27
Attitudes Concerning Death	29
Attitudes Concerning Funerals.	34
Conventional and Combination Funeral	36
Alternative Funeral	39

Chapter	Page
5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	55
Summary	55
Conclusion	60
REFERENCES.	63
APPENDIX A	66
Consent Form.	67
Cover Sheet	68
Questionnaire	69
APPENDIX B	79
Distribution Tables	80

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Characteristics of Respondents	30
2. Respondent's Attitudes Concerning Death	35
3. Responses to Aspects of the Conventional or Combination Funeral by Rank Order	38
4. Responses to Aspects of the Alternative Funeral by Rank Order	42
5. Relationship Between Aspects of Alternative Funeral: Lack of Expenditure and Burial of the Body Before the Service	43
6. Relationship Between Aspects of Alternative Funeral: Congregational Support and Burial of Body Before Service	44
7. Relationship Between Significance of Alternative Funeral to Bereaved and Memorial Service as a Celebration of Life	46
8. Relationship Between Memorial Service as Worship and Praise and Alternative Funeral as Sanctioning Grief Work	47
9. Relationship Between Memorial Service as Worship and Praise and Alternative Funeral as Offering Support and Strength	48
10. Relationship Between Memorial Service as Worship and Praise and Alternative Funeral as Personal Funeral Preference.	49
11. Relationship Between Memorial Service as Worship and Praise and Alternative Funeral as Family Member Funeral Preference	50
12. Relationship Between Annual Income and Funeral Preference	52
13. Relationship of Age to Burial of Body Before Memorial Service	53

Table

Page

14.	Relationship Between Personal Involvement in Planning Alternative Funeral and Degree of Personal Involvement Considered Helpful	54
-----	---	----

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps because death has been considered a taboo subject (Campbell, 1969), death practices have received little systematic attention in the past. Fulton (1964) stated that death as a taboo topic is exemplified by the fact that it is not considered an open or polite topic of conversation. Newspapers segregate death by devoting special pages to it. The dead are hidden from view as quickly as possible and removed to a funeral home. Children are protected from direct contact with and observations of death and the dead. The contemporary American society expects the stoical acceptance of death; its rational, secular, and efficiency orientation, according to Fulton (1967) and Campbell (1969), produces norms that encourage early termination of a mourning attitude. The expression of grief or sympathy is limited to a time and place. Within a week one is expected to be back on the job. There is an impatient "let's-get-on-with-it" concern that requires the survivor to pass quickly through bereavement to the resumption of his normal social tasks. Blauner (1966: p. 385) stated that the "modern hospital, as an organization, is committed to the routinization of the handling of death. To contain through isolation, and reduce, through orderly procedure, the

disturbance and disruption that are associated with the death crises".

Krupp (1962) maintained that:

Everything in our culture conspires to erase death from our minds, even from our feelings. Death, though threatening and difficult to handle, has been made remote. American society, its movies, television, and mores represent a supreme effort to preserve youth, and deny aging and death. Death has faded from our lives; it is no longer seen daily and anticipated inevitably, but denied and driven from our minds. Our behavior becomes extreme; when death does occur the deceased is over praised; consideration for the dead is sometimes greater than consideration for the living (p. 45,46).

Despite the fact that death is considered a taboo topic there has been a growing interest in the area of death, grief and funerals. Fulton (1970) cited four changes during the past four decades which have influenced the interest in the problem of death and parallels the changes in the character and social structure of the American society. The first change is the emergence of a secular viewpoint which has contributed not only to the problems that death presents contemporary society today but also to the objective analysis of these problems. Second, the American family over the past two generations has been transformed from a large, extended family into a small nuclear group, more child-centered than adult-centered. Third, medical science technology, with its associated public health programs, has focused attentions on death and related issues. The changes produced by medical science and other social innovations over the past two

generations, have brought about a fourth factor; namely, the change in the time, place and incidence of death itself. According to Fulton (1970: p. 24) there is a need to integrate "our contemporary ways of dealing with death with the emotional needs of the survivors. This situation, serious as it now is from the point of view of mental health, is getting worse and will continue to do so in the years ahead."

Concomitant with the growing concern with death is an increased interest with grief and funerals (Fulton, 1964) which has brought a growing hostility toward the functions and functionaries associated with death. Attitudes toward the rites and practices surrounding death are both negative and critical in nature (Fulton, 1964, 1971); however, the critics of the conventional funeral practices are seeking funeral reform, not advocating the abolition of the funeral rite.

Irion (1966: p. 59) stated, "It is not impossible for the funeral to be restored to its basic functions and to exert a potent influence upon American thought and behavior." Fulton (1971: p. 22) concurred that "...the funeral is both socially useful and emotionally valuable. A funeral is not only a sociological statement that death has occurred, it is also a declaration that a life has been lived. It is not only a rite for the dead but also the right of the living." According to Lamers (1965: p. 104,106) "...people are better off if they have a funeral on which to focus their attention. The funeral makes...things easier by providing the setting

in which people can begin to resolve their feelings about death." Lane (1970: p. 4012-A) added that:

...ritual provides a protected and guarded way of expressing emotion. It performs this function by providing a gap between 'overt emotionality'--the degree of emotion which is manifestly and inescapably expressed --and 'potential emotionality'--the degree of emotion which a form of expression is capable of carrying.

Harmer (1971: p. 150), a long standing critic of the funeral industry, asserted: "No thoughtful person would deny that a funeral can be of individual and social value when it serves as a mechanism for releasing tensions and for reaffirming beliefs."

According to Fulton (1971: p. 7) the problem areas concerning the conventional funeral are:

1. The basic nature of the American funeral
2. The charge of exploitation and opportunism on the part of some funeral directors
3. The role of the clergyman in funeral arrangements
4. The lack of social contacts between the funeral director and clergyman
5. The role of the funeral director in the areas of personal counseling

In another article Fulton (1971: p. 22) said "From the standpoint of mental hygiene what we must consider is the threat of increasing disruption of family and other relationships by death in a society which increasingly is unable either to accept or to explain it."

According to Irion (1966) the funeral becomes extremely important when one considers the fact that within a day or two following the funeral individuals are at work, routines are reestablished, and behavior unique to mourning is abandoned.

Fulton (1964: p. 366) believed that "like most profound events, death must be recognized and set off by ritual and ceremony." Again Fulton (1971: p. 47) stated "In a society where there is a strong tendency for many to respond to the death of another by turning away, the funeral is a vehicle through which recovery from the crises of bereavement is initiated."

Irion (1966) and Campbell (1969) seemed to agree with Blauner (1966: p. 394) in his statement "that death weakens the social group and calls forth anxieties; in response, members of a society cling closer together." Campbell (1969: p. 210) aside from viewing the funeral as an opportunity for mourning, reviving treasured memories and honoring the departed suggested a more useful view is to see the funeral rites and death attitudes as serving the purposes of assisting the survivors to restructure their relational system. "Funeral ceremonies function to reintegrate the group and attend to the needs of the living." Irion (1966: p. 99) maintained that the funeral should function "...to bind the individual to the group. There is here an indication of the willingness of the group to accept the mourner with all of his feelings. Group participation, indicating group solidarity, is a source of support and strength for the mourner." Irion lamented that the conventional funeral is not

...an occasion for the recognition of loss and the effect of sundered relationships on the living. Rather than providing a structure which sanctions and enables the work of mourning, the funeral has

repeatedly become one of the many forces working for the repression of the authentic feelings of the bereaved (p. 57).

Peniston, (1962) stated that although the pain of grief cannot be avoided, proper preparation will help in facing the work of grief and give family members insight into ways of helping each other.

Kastenbaum and Aisenberg (1962: p. 211) stated that the funeral should place less emphasis upon adorning and displaying the body. "When death occurs the focus of thought and feeling of everyone concerned should be on the enhancement of life's values for the living." Irion (cited in Forest 1963, p. 23) lists criteria for the purpose of evaluating a funeral service, including: the funeral must deal with death realistically; the funeral must accept and recognize deep feelings, rather than cover them by superficial aestheticism; the funeral must provide a sense of finality; and the funeral must be both sensitive to the individual needs of the bereaved and dynamic and variable in form and content.

As Irion (1966: p. 58) aptly stated: "With bland acceptance of the status quo--one goes through the motions of the funeral because it is the thing to do, but no particular value is derived other than the support which comes through conformity." Regardless of how valueless the conventional funeral has become there are few alternatives for the bereaved family. Proper disposal of the body must be considered and the recognition of a death must be made.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although many theoretical assumptions have been espoused by theorists claiming the value of funeral reform or of an alternative funeral plan, the writer found no empirical studies which measured either the benefits of a functional funeral service or the values of an alternative funeral plan. There is, however, an alternative funeral plan offered by the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite congregation in Wichita, Kansas. This funeral plan consists of: (1) the option of building a coffin for the deceased by family and friends to facilitate what Lindemann (cited in Fulton, 1970: p. 26) called grief work, "i.e. emancipation from the emotional bondage to the deceased and the formation of new relationships"; (2) the private burial of the body as soon after death as possible; and (3) following the private burial, a public memorial service for the deceased is held in the church at a convenient time for the family.

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine the alternative funeral plan offered by the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite congregation in Wichita, Kansas. Could aspects of this alternative plan provide a more satisfactory model than conventional funerals for assisting the bereaved in effectively working through grief to a transition of life without the deceased and to a reunion with the living group.

Specific objectives were:

1. To identify attitudes toward death, grief, and rituals surrounding death;

2. To examine specific aspects of the alternative funeral plan in relation to the value perceived by members of the congregation.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Three types of funerals were considered; the conventional, the alternative and the combination.

1. The conventional funeral--a service package purchased from a funeral home including a manufactured coffin, a public ceremony held in the funeral home with the body present, and a public burial.

2. The alternative funeral--the services offered by the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita, Kansas, consisting of a private burial followed by a public memorial held in the church and the option of building the coffin for the deceased.

3. The combination funeral--a service package purchased from a funeral home in which the body is present during a public or private service held in the church followed by the burial of the deceased.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ATTITUDES TOWARD DEATH

Greenberg and Alexander (1962) stated that although death is a source of anxiety at all times, it is dealt with effectively most of the time by most people. Death anxiety is more likely to become manifest at times of life stress, when interpersonal relations and other aspects of a person's life space become less satisfactory. Their study consisted of three areas: (1) death and its affective impact on the individual, (2) cognitive responses from which conscious reactions to death are derived, and (3) the relationship between death anxiety and ego strength. Subjects were 14 female and 12 male college students who lived on a ward in a large research hospital. Two interviews were set up for each subject. The first interview was designed to put the subject at ease by helping him become accustomed to the surroundings, interviewer, and procedure. The second interview was structured with open-ended questions about (1) recollections of early experiences with death, (2) the subjects' current feelings, and (3) conjectures about the future. Any increased affective response in this interview was assumed to arise from the subject matter. Between the two interviews, subjects were tested using three instruments: a specially devised

Inevitable Situations Test, the Barron Ego Strength Scale, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Results showed that the female sample was much less variable in response than the male sample. Analysis of the data supported the idea that death has an affective impact on the individual and partially supported the hypothesis that cognitive responses are derived from conscious reactions to death. No relationship was found between death anxiety and ego strength.

Kalish (1963) studied death, dying and related variables using a questionnaire with 75 Likert-type attitude items taken from 200 essays on "How I feel about death". Each item was "anchored" and respondents were asked to indicate agreement on a five-point scale. The self-selected subjects consisted of 280 college students and 427 residents of metropolitan Los Angeles. The results were divided into two major attitudinal clusters. The first cluster included nine factors which appeared to define a sacred-secular constellation. Four of the nine factors involved acceptance of Judeo-Christian concepts, e.g., traditional religion, funerals, mourning, family in attendance; and four emphasized secular or social values, e.g., avoidance of contact with dead, dread of ugly death, death anxiety, fear of atomic death, knowledge of death, and fear of burial. In his discussion Kalish stated: "Religious affiliation appeared unimportant as a determinant of death fears. Those who are more consistent in their behavior, i.e., regular attenders of church and non-attenders are less anxious about death" (p. 69).

In a study on adolescent attitudes toward death, Maurer (1964: p. 193) hypothesized that "death, while seldom the topic of the adolescent's preferred, deliberate consideration, nevertheless hovers on the horizon of his peripheral attention and colors his life style to such an extent that significant and graduated differences will be found to correlate with academic success." The subjects were 172 senior-high students between the ages of 17-19 from differing economic brackets, races, and religions. Each subject was given 30 minutes to write an essay on "What comes to mind when you think of love?" Maurer concluded:

Differences in thought range from very childish to very mature. Statements made and vocabulary used in spontaneous essays tend to be associated in degree of maturity with academic achievement. Poor achievement is associated with greater fear, often so pervasive that it can be communicated only indirectly. High achievement is associated with a greater sophistication in acknowledging inevitability. The innate I.Q. which cannot be measured, may pose a less crucial problem than the freeing of all human minds irrational fears that hamper full functioning (p. 89).

Martin (1965) conducted a study to relate religious attitudes and behavior to a concern about death among church going adults, and to identify some of the areas which improvements in methodology might clarify the findings of previous studies with 58 adult members of three churches in middle Tennessee. Thirteen were from the Church of Christ, 13 were from the Methodist Church, and 12 were from the Christian Church. The mean age was 44 and the subjects were

from lower socio-economic status. The instruments used in the questionnaire included a religious participation scale, Broen's Religious Attitude Inventory, Sarnoff and Corwin's Fear of Death scale, and extension of Sarnoff and Corwin's scale, a sentence-completion measure of subjects concern over death, and a measure of nearness of death in one's family. From the results Martin concluded: "Religions serve as a means of confronting and reducing one's fear of death. It appears that the attitudes one forms toward death are not shaped by death contacts". (p. 323).

Goldburgh (1967) in his study "Attitudes of College Students toward Personal Death" found that females do not appear to fear death, discuss it or think about it significantly more than males. The only sex difference found was that females judged themselves more religious. Age, number of years in college, and religion have some affect on attitudes toward death. Of the respondents, 75 percent felt that belief in an after-life influenced their feelings about their personal death. Contacts with the deaths of others did not significantly influence attitudes toward death. Those who feared death were more likely not to believe in life after death than those who did not fear death.

In a study of 85 undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses, Lester (1967a) showed that subjects who agree to statements about death expressing a large range of favorable/unfavorable attitudes have a greater fear of death than subjects who agree with a smaller range of

statements. Inconsistency of attitudes toward death appeared to be accompanied by a greater fear of death.

In another study Lester (1967b) found that suicidal adolescents have less fear of death and greater concern with the grief of friends than non-suicidal adolescents. According to Lester, death for suicidal adolescents "is not an adventure but a cure for their problems". Lester (1969: p. 182) in a study involving 199 college females further concluded that the "association between inconsistency in death attitudes and the fear of death may exist, but if it does, it is a weak one".

Collett and Lester (1969) devised a study to separate measures of death fears. They attempted to distinguish the "fear of death from the fear of the process of dying and to differentiate between these fears depending upon whether they are for oneself or for another" (p. 179). Twenty-five female undergraduates were given 38 statements composed of the four fears: fear of death of self, fear of death of others, fear of dying of self, and fear of dying of others. The subjects were required to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each item on a 6-point scale ranging from strong agreement (+3) to strong disagreement (-3). Collett and Lester concluded:

the low intercorrelations between the four fears indicate the potential usefulness of differentiating these four specific fears rather than indiscriminately grouping all items in the same scale. The low correlations may reflect a general death fear which is tapped by all death scales, and in cases where the scales share a common process (death/dying) or a

common referant (self/other) they may reflect this shared object. Of the four fears, fear of dying of others was least feared. In fact, for this subscale the mean score was negative, indicating that subjects faced this topic in general rather than avoiding it (p. 180).

Investigating whether the fear of death of 16-20 college females was related to the fear of death of their parents, Lester (1970) found that the fear of death of the daughters was significantly associated with the fear of death of the mothers for the specific fears of dying of others and of an overall fear of death. The correlations between the fear of death of daughters and of the fathers were also positive, but did not reach statistical significance.

In a study comparing religious behavior and the fear of death, 51 female college students were administered a word association test of words overtly referring to death. Lester (1970) found that the effects of religiousity upon the fear of death appeared to be stronger than the effects of denomination. According to Lester:

The results appear to indicate that, rather than reducing the fear of death and dying for individuals, religious belief shifts concern away from the self to others. Whether this shift is a result of the religious belief or whether the difference is part of the complex of attitudes and personality traits that help determine whether an individual will come to possess a strong religious belief is a question for further research (p. 187).

Blake (1970) investigated the attitudes toward death of 45 adolescents and 55 older people as they related to the

psycho-social developmental states. Blake found that older people tend to use denial much more than adolescents. This factor operated in the finding that adolescents reported more fear of death than older people while older people were more religious than young.

Lester and Kam (1971) investigated factors that might be influential in the development of death attitudes among 188 female undergraduate students. They found that those who had experienced a recent loss thought of their own death more frequently, were more inclined to entertain thoughts of some specific disease as a cause of death, were more likely to picture death as horribly painful, and were more likely to be depressed by cemeteries. Lester and Kam concluded that recent loss does affect attitudes toward death; although that effect is not very strong, it serves to modify already existing attitudes toward death.

Characteristics of sex differences in attitudes towards death were investigated by Lester (1971: p. 54) who found:

Males were more likely to picture themselves vividly in their imagination as dead, less likely to entertain thoughts of dying from specific disease, less likely to wish that they were dead, less likely to be depressed by funeral services and by cemeteries, less likely to be depressed by death stories, more likely to want to know for certain whether there is a life after death and less likely to believe in life after death. The males were more likely to think about death than were females but had less negative affective reaction to death.

Templer, Ruff, and Franks (1971) compared the degree of death anxiety as a function of age and sex and determined the

extent to which death anxiety of adolescents resembled that of their parents. The subjects were from four sources: (1) residents of an upper-middle class apartment building, (2) low income aides in a state hospital, (3) heterogeneous psychiatric patients, and (4) high school students and parents. No significant correlations were found between Death Anxiety Scale scores and age for any group studied. For all groups, females exhibited higher Death Anxiety Scale scores than males. Death Anxiety Scale scores of both male and female adolescents correlated most highly with the scores of the parents of the same sex. It appeared that death anxiety is not so much a fixed entity as a state that is sensitive to environmental events in general and to the impact of intimate interpersonal relationships in particular.

ATTITUDES TOWARD GRIEF AND FUNERALS

Although empirical research into attitudes toward grief and funerals has been sparse, several investigators noted problems with the expression of grief and the significance of the conventional funeral. Gorer (1968) in his study of 359 subjects of both sexes, of ages over 16, and from every social class of Britain concluded that British people are without adequate guidance as to how to treat death and bereavement and are without social help in living through and coming to terms with grief and mourning. A minority of people get limited assistance and comfort through their beliefs in religion and ritual provided. Gorer indentified three stages

of grief for most adult mourners:

(1) A short period of shock, usually lasting from the occurrence of death to the disposal of the body; (2) a period of intense mourning accompanied by the withdrawal of much attention and affection from the external world and by physiological changes such as disturbed sleep; and (3) a final period of reestablished physical homeostasis. Only the first period is given social recognition. Mourners are not given support or guidance for the second, the intense period of mourning. In fact, after a funeral, there is to be a denial of mourning (p. 95).

Shneidman (1971) in conjunction with Psychology Today published a questionnaire concerning death attitudes, beliefs and wishes about afterlife, funerals and other death rituals. More than 30,000 readers returned the research questionnaires. The typical respondent was 20-24 years of age, single, Caucasian, somewhat religious, Protestant, politically independent, somewhat liberal, and female. She was a college graduate, from a small family, earning between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year and living in the Midwest.

Shneidman found that introspection and meditation influenced over a third of the respondents attitudes toward death. The average respondent thought about his own death "occasionally", and the thought was likely to make him feel resolved in relation to life or to take pleasure in being alive. Eighty percent believed that funerals are "very much overpriced", and 62 percent believed that funerals should cost less than \$300. Two percent considered a price in excess of \$600 to be a reasonable charge. Two percent preferred

formal funerals "as large as possible" while 33 percent wanted no funerals of any kind. Large formal funerals were rejected unanimously by anti-religious respondents, those who wanted no part of any afterlife, or those who have religious backgrounds that are neither Jewish, Catholic nor Protestant. The less religious one is the less likely he is to want a funeral. Forty-seven percent believed that rituals such as funerals and wakes are rather important for the survivors, although 18 percent said that such rituals are not important at all. Six percent approved of lying in state at one's own funeral. A substantial majority, 70 percent, definitely did not want to lie in open caskets. If it were entirely up to them, 32 percent of the respondents would donate their bodies to medical schools or to science. More chose cremation than burial.

In a study to assess attitudes toward funeral directors and funeral practices, Fulton (1963) mailed questionnaires to 10,000 households in major urban areas and to 893 memorial societies in the United States. In all, 1722 questionnaires were returned; 1264 by the general public; and 458 by members of the 11 participating memorial societies. An additional 315 people completed interviews. Only 12 percent of the householders and 7 percent of the memorial group indicated that the prime function of the contemporary funeral was religious. The majority of householders felt that a funeral met the emotional needs of the bereaved family. The memorial organizations challenged the funerals efficiency as a sociological or psychological aide.

In a Compilation of Studies of Attitudes Toward Death, Funerals and Funeral Directors (1971) Fulton reported the findings of a 1959 study involving 202 Catholic priests and 389 Protestant ministers:

Eighty-eight percent of the Catholic clergy compared to sixty-five percent of the Protestant clergy thought the modern day funeral adequate for its purposes. On the other hand, only three percent of the Catholic clergy and fourteen percent of the Protestant clergy replying believed the funeral ceremony as we now know it to be inadequate. The reason for this inadequacy was explained in terms of what the clergymen believed were pagan elements present in the modern funeral. Under this heading are included such practices as ostentatious or ornate display, the open casket, and the elaborate use of flowers. Other reservations such as the funeral intensifies grief, the funeral director now controls the funeral, or people are concerned too much about the social aspect of the funeral were also mentioned as detracting from the funeral's purposes. These charges came mostly from the protestant members of our sample...they reported that today the emphasis of the ceremony is upon the hope of future life and on comforting the living. Frequently mentioned in addition was the fact that the funeral has become a funeral director or funeral home-centered ceremony, that it has become more pagan, and, finally, it was suggested by some that the tendency today is to disguise death--to hide from it in the funeral ceremony itself (p. 4).

Fifty-one percent of the Protestant ministers and 41 percent of the Catholic priests believed the American funeral director exploits or takes advantage of a family's grief in selling funeral services.

In a study based upon mailed questionnaires returned by 1060 persons from all geographic regions of the United States,

Blackwell and Talarzyk (1974) indicated that there will be substantial changes in funeral services in the future with increasing diversity in the way Americans solve the problems created by death. Of those who responded, 62 percent preferred burial for themselves and 82 percent preferred burial for their loved ones. Fifteen percent indicated cremation for themselves but only 8 percent wanted cremation for a relative or close friend. Fifty percent believed that the casket should be open during calling hours but closed during the funeral while 30 percent believed the casket should be open both times. Fifty percent believed that funerals should stay about the same as they are now; 29 percent stated that they should be smaller and more private. Five percent believed that the body should not be present during calling hours or during the funeral. Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that it is important to go to a funeral home and express sympathy to survivors. Eighty percent agreed that a funeral is a time for love and showing concern for others. Twenty-five percent agreed that funeral prices are reasonable, while 50 percent disagreed with this statement.

SUMMARY

Research related to attitudes toward death, grief and funerals has been concerned with such variables as religious affiliation, degree of religiousity, contacts with death, sex, age, and educational level.

According to Kalish (1963) and Lester (1970) religious

affiliation appears unimportant as a determinant of death fears. Rather than reducing the fear of death and dying for individuals, religious belief shifts concern away from the self to others. However, religions serve as a means of confronting and reducing ones fear of death (Martin, 1965). Both Catholic and Protestant clergy agreed that death tends to be disguised today and hidden in funeral ceremonies (Fulton, 1971).

Kalish (1963) and Lester (1967A) reported that those who are more consistent in their religious behavior, such as regular church attendance, are less anxious about death and those who are inconsistent in their attitudes toward death appeared to have a greater fear of death. In a later study Lester (1969) softened his position and concluded that inconsistency in death attitudes and the fear of death may coexist but in a weak way. Gorer (1968) reported that British people are without social help in living through and coming to terms with grief and mourning although a minority of people do get limited assistance and comfort from their religion and ritual provided.

Several studies investigated the variables of age and sex. Suicidal adolescents have less fear of death and greater concern with the grief of friends than non suicidal adolescents (Lester, 1967B). Female undergraduates according to Collett and Lester (1969) reported the least amount of fear for the dying of others as compared to the fear of death of self, fear of dying of self and fear of death of others.

Older people tend to use denial much more than adolescents (Blake, 1970).

There appeared to be conflicting views concerning two studies investigating the differences between fear of death between children and their parents. Lester (1970) found that fear of death of the daughters was significantly related to the fear of death of the mothers, but non-significantly related to the fear of death of their fathers.

In two studies comparing the different attitudes toward death of male and female college students, Goldburgh (1967) found that females do not appear to fear death, discuss it or think about it significantly more than males. The only sex difference Goldburgh found was that females judged themselves more religious. Lester (1971) concluded from his study that males were more likely to think about death than females but had less affective reaction to death, were more likely to picture themselves as dead, less likely to be depressed by funeral services and by cemeteries, more likely to want to know for certain whether there is life after death and less likely to believe in life after death.

Contacts with death do not significantly influence attitudes toward death. There might be a temporary effect but no long term effect (Martin, 1965; Goldburgh, 1967). Lester and Kam (1971) found that recent loss does affect attitudes toward death although that effect is not very strong, it serves to modify already existing attitudes toward death. Support for the hypothesis that death has an

affective impact on the individual and partial support for the idea that cognitive responses are derived from conscious reactions to death was found by Greenberg and Alexander (1962).

According to the Templer, Ruff and Franks study (1971) death anxiety is not so much a fixed entity as a state that is sensitive to environmental events in general and to the impact of intimate interpersonal relationships.

Studies involving large representative samples in the United States (Fulton, 1963; Shneidman; and Blackwell and Talarzyk, 1974) suggested that although a majority of the general public believe that funerals meet the emotional needs of the bereaved despite the overprice, there will be a substantial change in the funeral service in the future with increasing diversity in the way Americans solve the problems of death.

Chapter 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

An alternative funeral plan offered by a Mennonite congregation in Wichita, Kansas, was the focus of this descriptive study. The writer contacted the minister of this congregation, arranged an interview, and discussed this alternative funeral service.

A questionnaire designed to elicit attitudes of the congregation members concerning death and funerals was approved by the minister and the Board of Deacons at a second meeting.

MEASURING INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire had two major foci: (1) attitudes toward death and (2) attitudes concerning funeral preferences. Items designed to measure death attitudes were adopted from Shneidman (1971) and items assessing funeral preferences were developed by the writer based, in part, on the theoretical assumptions of Irion (1966) and Fulton (1964). These questions were combined to form one instrument (see Appendix A) which was pretested with 30 graduate students in the course marital interaction.

Questions on attitudes toward death were concerned with: the meaning of death; the role of religion; degree of concern

with death; image survival after death; importance of funeral customs; and costs of funerals.

Questions dealing with funeral preferences were concerned with beneficial aspects of the funeral; purposes and significance of the funeral; value of group participation to the bereaved; and personal funeral preferences.

Responses to items consisting of multiple choice, yes-no, and rank order, were forced answer or open ended.

A subject consent form was attached to the questionnaire informing the subjects of any risks involved and of their right to withdraw from the research at any time (Appendix A). A cover sheet (Appendix A) explaining the intent of the researcher, defining the three funeral plans, and describing the procedure for returning the questionnaire and consent form introduced the questionnaire to the respondent.

METHOD OF ADMINISTRATION

The investigator was introduced by Reverend Melvin Schmidt to the congregation of the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita, Kansas, during regular Sunday services on December 15, 1974. The study was introduced by the investigator, and the minister and deacons of the church encouraged members of the congregation to participate.

Subjects were instructed to carefully read and sign the consent form if they planned to participate in the study. To guarantee anonymity, subjects were instructed to remove the signed consent form and place it in a box labeled "consent

forms: located outside the church office window. Instructions were given to place the completed questionnaires in a box labeled "questionnaires" also located outside the church office window. Respondents were asked to return the completed questionnaires within two weeks.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Responses to the questionnaires were coded and key punched on computer cards. Statistical computations were performed by computer. Frequency distributions and chi squares were obtained as were cross tabulations and levels of significance. Significance was set at the .05 level. Lambda scores were used as a test of strength between the relationship of nominal data and gamma scores were used as a test of strength between the relationship of ordinal and interval data. Because there is no standardized level for lambda or gamma, the results were reviewed by the researcher and a lambda score above .3 and a gamma score above .6 were considered strong relationships.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

RESPONDENTS ANALYSIS

Sixty-four completed questionnaires were returned. Of the respondents, 31 were males (48.4 percent) and 33 were females (51.6 percent). Sixty-three of the respondents (98.4 percent) lived in the city and one (1.6 percent) lived in a rural area. Thirty-four respondents (53.1 percent) were born into the Mennonite faith; twenty (31.1 percent) joined as a youth (13-21 years of age); five (7.8 percent) joined as adults (over 21 years of age); four (1.3 percent) joined as a child (12 years and under); one respondent was not of the Mennonite faith.

Four-fifths of the respondents (70.3 percent) had been members of the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite congregation for more than four years; seven (10.9 percent) had been members for two to four years; five (7.8 percent) had been members for less than one year; two (3.1 percent) had been members for more than one year; two (3.1 percent) had been members all of their lives; and three (4.7 percent) were not members of the congregation.

Sixty respondents (93.8 percent) considered themselves "actively involved in this congregation". Three (4.7 percent) did not consider themselves actively involved and one

respondent failed to answer the question.

Twenty-six respondents (40.6 percent) did not personally nor did any of their family hold an office in the church. Of the remaining respondents: twelve (18.8 percent) did hold offices in the church, fifteen (23.4 percent) had other family members who held offices in the church; for eleven (17.2 percent) both they personally, and a member of their family held an office in the church.

Thirty-nine respondents (60.9 percent) considered themselves "somewhat religious"; twenty-four respondents (37.5 percent) considered themselves "very religious"; and one respondent indicated "anti-religious".

Thirty respondents (46.9 percent) were from 40-50 years of age; thirteen respondents (20.3 percent) were over 60 years of age; ten respondents (15.6 percent) were 30-39 years of age; nine respondents (14.1 percent) were 21-20 years of age; and two respondents (3.1 percent) were under 21 years of age.

Fifty-five respondents (85.9 percent) were "presently married for the first time". Six respondents (9.4 percent) were "single, never married". Two (3.1 percent) respondents were "remarried" and one respondent was separated or divorced.

Twenty-nine respondents (45.3 percent) were college graduates and nineteen respondents (29.7 percent) had advanced degrees. Thirteen respondents (20.3 percent) reported having some college. Two respondents (3.1 percent) were high school graduates while one respondent (1.6 percent)

had less than a high school degree.

The approximate annual income of thirty-two respondents (50.0 percent) ranged from \$13,000 to \$25,000. Twenty-two respondents' (34.4 percent) annual income ranged from \$5,000 to \$12,000. The annual income for eight respondents ranged from \$26,000 to \$50,000 and two respondents reported less than \$5,000 for their annual income. No respondents reported over \$50,000 for annual income.

The average respondent was of either sex, lived in the city, was between 40-59 years of age, was presently married for the first time, and was a college graduate with an income of \$13,000 to \$25,000 annually. He or she was born into the Mennonite faith, was involved actively in the Lorraine Avenue congregation having been a member for four or more years, but did not hold an office in the church. A summary of this data is presented in Table 1.

ATTITUDES CONCERNING DEATH

Religious upbringing influenced twenty-five respondents (39.1 percent) present attitudes toward death. The death of someone close influenced twelve respondents (18.8 percent). Eleven respondents (17.2 percent) reported introspection and meditation as influential, and ritual (e.g. funerals) influenced four respondents (6.3 percent). The responses: Television, radio, or motion pictures; longevity of one's family; and one's health or physical condition were selected by one respondent (1.6 percent), respectively. Three persons

Table 1
Characteristics of Respondents

VARIABLE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	VARIABLE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
<u>Sex</u>			<u>Level of Religiousity</u>		
Male	31	48.4	Somewhat religious	39	60.9
Female	33	51.6	Very religious	25	37.5
			Anti-religious	1	1.6
<u>Residence</u>			<u>Mennonite Faith</u>		
Urban	63	98.4	Born a Mennonite	34	53.1
Rural	1	1.6	Joined as child	4	6.3
			Joined as youth	20	31.1
<u>Age</u>			Joined as adults	5	7.8
Under 21	2	3.1	Not of Mennonite faith	1	1.6
21-29	9	14.1			
30-39	10	15.6	<u>Member of LAMC</u>		
40-59	30	46.9	Less than 1 year	5	7.8
Over 60	13	20.3	1-2 years	2	3.1
			2-4 years	7	10.9
<u>Income</u>			4 or more years	45	70.3
Under 5,000	2	3.1	Lifetime	2	3.1
5-12,000	22	34.4	Not a member	3	4.7
13-25,000	32	50.0			
26-50,000	8	12.5	<u>Involvement in LAMC</u>		
<u>Marital Status</u>			Actively involved	60	93.8
Presently married	55	85.9	Inactively involved	3	4.7
for first time	6	9.4	Do not personally nor member of		
Single, never married	2	3.1	family holds office	26	40.6
Remarried	1	1.6	Personally holds office	12	18.8
Widowed			Member of family holds office	15	23.4
			Both personally and family member	11	17.2
<u>Education</u>					
Less than high school	1	1.6			
High School Graduate	2	3.1			
Some college	13	20.3			
College Graduate	29	45.3			
Advanced degree	19	29.7			

(4.7 percent) responded to more than one item choice.

For twenty-nine respondents (45.3 percent) religion played "a very significant role" in the development of their attitudes toward death. Twenty-six (40.6 percent) reported that religion had played "a rather significant role". Religion as "somewhat influential, but not a major role" in the development of attitudes toward death was selected by seven (10.9 percent). Two (3.1 percent) respondents reported that religion played "a relatively minor role".

Thirty-six respondents (56.3 percent) strongly believed in life after death, seventeen (26.6 percent) tended to believe in life after death, seven (10.9 percent) were uncertain, and one (1.6 percent) tended to doubt that there is a life after death. Regardless of their belief about life after death, fifty respondents (78.1 percent) strongly wished there was life after death, while fourteen (21.9 percent) were indifferent to life after death.

Twenty-nine (45.3 percent) respondents reported that death meant the termination of this life but with survival of the spirit. The beginning of life after death, a transition to a new beginning, was the meaning of death for twenty-four (37.5 percent). Six respondents reported a joining of the spirit with a universal cosmic consciousness; two (3.1 percent) reported death as the final process of life; and two (3.1 percent) didn't know what death meant to them. One (1.6 percent) wrote that death meant "separation from loved ones, psychological withdrawal from life".

Causing grief to relatives and friends was the most distasteful aspect of death for sixteen respondents (25.0 percent) while a painful death was the most distasteful aspect for fourteen (21.9 percent). Ten respondents (15.6 percent) selected "I could no longer have any experiences", and "no longer providing for dependents" was reported by nine (14.1 percent). Eight respondents reported the end of their projects and plans as the most distasteful aspect of their death. The uncertainty of what might happen to them if there is a life after death was the distasteful aspect of death for three respondents (4.7 percent). Four (6.3 percent) chose not to respond to this question.

In response to "Which of the following do you most often feel when you think of your own death, or when circumstances make you realize your own mortality?", sixteen (25.0 percent) reported fearful; five (4.8 percent) felt discouraged; eleven (17.2 percent) were depressed; three (4.7 percent) felt purposeless; thirty-two (50.0 percent) felt resolved in relation to life; and forty-three (67.2 percent) felt pleasure in being alive. Other responses were:

No more sharing of time, talents and finances with others.

Relief--because then I no longer think of myself as invincible--going on forever--and can explode the taboo of not thinking or talking about death.

I find consolation in the words of Pericles:
My sarcophagus is the hearts and minds of my students. As an educator my work will go on, I hope.

Please in meeting my Savior.

I feel the need to get ready for death and live my days with the definite goal in mind--to follow Christ's way of love.

Very difficult to ascertain when one is not actually faced with the situation.

Would you believe all, on different occasions of course.

Curious.

Eighty percent agreed that there has been an increase in the amount of concern with death in the United States in the last twenty-five to fifty years, although there was little agreement as to why. Reasons listed were medical advances (17.2 percent); atomic and nuclear bombs (14.1 percent); television and other mass media (9.4 percent); national violence (7.8 percent); existential philosophy (7.8 percent); pollution of the environment (4.7 percent); war (1.6 percent); and drug culture (1.6 percent). Responses to the open ended question concerning reasons for increased concern were:

Many are searching for a deeper meaning for their lives and death is part of life.

A return to religion.

The church.

Books written questioning validity of 'conventional funerals'.

Less concern now with making a living and more time to think of possibility of living a longer life.

Increase in education in "Death and Dying".

I don't know.

Ninety percent of the respondents were interested in having their image survive after their death, with their

interest ranging from somewhat (21.9 percent) through moderate (40.6 percent) to very interested (25.0 percent). Seven subjects (10.9 percent) were not very interested and one subject (1.6 percent) was totally uninterested in having his image survive after death.

If it were entirely up to them, 18 respondents (28.1 percent) selected burial for the disposal of their body after death; seventeen (26.6 percent) preferred cremation; seventeen (26.6 percent) chose donation to medical school; and twelve (18.8 percent) were indifferent to method of disposal. Table 2 summarizes respondent's attitudes concerning death.

ATTITUDES CONCERNING FUNERALS

Recent personal involvement with death of family members was reported by two-thirds of the respondents. The types of funeral services held for these particular family members were: combination funeral, 32.8 percent; alternative funeral, 20.3 percent; and conventional funeral, 14.1 percent. Of the respondents who had a recent personal involvement with death, fourteen (21.9 percent) were very much involved in planning the funeral, five (7.8 percent) were somewhat involved, and twenty-four (37.5 percent) had no involvement.

Marking the death of an individual with a ceremony or ritual of some kind was important for fifty-five (90.6 percent) of the respondents, while five (7.8 percent) did not believe that it was important. Wakes and funerals for the survivors were extremely important for twenty-five

Table 2

Respondents' Attitudes Concerning Death

ATTITUDE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	ATTITUDE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
<u>Influential in Forming Attitude</u>			<u>Distasteful Aspects of Death</u>		
Religious upbringing	25	39.1	Causing grief to relatives and friends	16	25.0
Death of someone else	12	18.8	Painful death	14	21.9
Introspection & meditation	11	17.2	No longer have any experiences	10	15.6
Ritual	4	6.3	No longer provide for dependents	9	14.1
Mass Media	1	1.6	End of projects and plans	8	12.5
Longevity of one's family	1	1.6	Uncertain of what might happen to them after death	3	4.7
Health	1	1.6			
More than one item	3	4.7			
<u>Influence of Religion</u>			<u>Feelings Concerning Death of Self</u>		
Very significant role	29	45.3	Fearful	16	25.0
Rather significant role	26	40.6	Discouraged	5	4.8
Somewhat influential	7	10.9	Depressed	11	17.2
Relatively minor role	2	3.1	Purposeless	3	4.7
			Resolved in relation to life	32	50.0
			Pleasure in being alive	43	67.2
<u>Belief in Life After Death</u>			<u>Reasons for Increase in Death Concern</u>		
Strongly believe	36	56.3	Medical advances	11	17.2
Tended to believe	17	26.6	Nuclear bombs	9	14.1
Uncertain	7	10.9	Television and other mass media	6	9.4
Tended to doubt	1	1.6	National violence	5	7.8
			Existential philosophy	5	7.8
<u>Wish for Life After Death</u>			Pollution of the environment	3	4.7
Strongly wish there is	50	78.1	War	1	1.6
Indifferent	14	21.9	Drug culture	1	1.6
<u>Meaning of Death</u>			<u>Survival of Self Image After Death</u>		
Termination of this life	29	45.3	Very interested	16	25.0
Transition to new beginning	24	37.5	Moderately interested	26	40.6
Joining of spirit	6	9.4	Somewhat interested	14	21.9
Final process of life	2	3.1	Not very interested	7	10.9
Don't know	2	3.1	Not at all interested	1	1.6
			<u>Disposal of Body of Self</u>		
			Burial	18	28.1
			Cremation	17	26.6
			Donation to medical school	17	26.6
			Indifferent	12	18.8

(39.1 percent) respondents; somewhat important for six (9.4 percent). Ten respondents (15.6 percent) were undecided as to the importance of wakes and funerals.

Fifty-nine (92.2 percent) respondents felt a funeral should provide a structure which sanctions and enables working through one's own grief. Group participation in the funeral as a support and strength for the bereaved was valued by 96.9 percent of the respondents. "Lying in state" in an open casket was approved by ten (15.6 percent) respondents; however, twenty-three respondents (35.9 percent) disapproved and fourteen (21.9 percent) strongly disapproved of lying in state. Sixteen respondents (25.0 percent) indicated indifference to this custom.

The cost of funerals in the United States was considered very much overpriced by fifty-three (82.8 percent) of the respondents. Nine respondents (14.1 percent) felt that no one has to pay for what he doesn't want and two respondents (3.0 percent) indicated that, in terms of costs and services rendered, prices were reasonable.

CONVENTIONAL AND/OR COMBINATION FUNERALS

Responses to the item "Please number in order (1=most helpful) what aspects of the conventional or combination funeral you consider helpful to the bereaved" were grouped in the following manner: responses one through three were considered more helpful; responses four through eight were considered less helpful. Fifty-two respondents (81.3 percent)

listed personal support from the community; fifty-two respondents (81.3 percent) liked the religious aspects; forty (62.5 percent) indicated the choice as to the degree of involvement; eight (14.5 percent) considered the extra services offered by the mortuary; four (6.3 percent) indicated the public display of lavish concern; and one (1.6 percent) indicated the public burial of the body. Other helpful aspects of the conventional or combination funeral indicated by five (6.9 percent) respondents were:

An attitude of hope and praise and faith generated.

Affirmation of the whole life of the deceased.

Celebration of life and death.

The percentages responding less helpful to individual items of the conventional or combination funeral were: public burial, 81.3 percent; the body present during the service, 50.0 percent; public display of lavish concern for the deceased, 51.7 percent; extra services offered by the mortuary, 50.0 percent; personal choice as to the degree of involvement, 10.9 percent; religious aspects, 3.1 percent; and five respondents (7.9 percent) indicated community support less helpful. Table 3 is a composite summary of the number responding to the rank order 1=most helpful to 8=least helpful for the aspects of the conventional or combination funeral. Tables 15-21 (in Appendix B) presents the distribution of those responding to these items according to sex, age, education, income and religiosity.

Table 3

Responses to Aspects of the Conventional or Combination
Funeral by Rank Order

Aspects	Rank Order (1 = most helpful; 8 = least helpful)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 Missing Observation
Support from community	33	13	6	3	1	1	0	7
Religious aspects	17	29	6	2	0	0	0	10
Choice of degree of involvement	7	8	25	2	2	1	2	17
Extra mortuary services	1	2	5	13	6	9	4	24
Public display	0	1	3	8	6	6	12	27
Body Present during service	0	1	2	5	8	10	9	29
Public Burial	1	0	0	6	13	6	4	33
Other	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	59

ALTERNATIVE FUNERAL

Of the three funeral plans--conventional, alternative, and combination, the alternative funeral offered the best structure which sanctions and enables working through one's grief for forty-five respondents (70.3 percent) and offered more support and strength for the bereaved for forty-six respondents (71.9 percent). The combination funeral was ranked second on each of these items by fourteen respondents (21.9 percent). None of the respondents indicated that the conventional funeral offered support and strength for the bereaved or for working through one's personal grief. Tables 22 and 23 (in Appendix B) present the distribution of those responding to these items according to sex, age, education, income, and religiousity.

Over three-fourths of the respondents (79.7 percent) preferred their church's alternative funeral plan for themselves and 75 percent preferred this plan for family members or close friends. The combination funeral was preferred for themselves by ten respondents (15.6 percent) and for family members by fifteen respondents (23.4 percent). A majority of the respondents (53.9 percent) preferred to be very much involved in planning the funeral for a family member and 42.9 percent preferred partial involvement. Two respondents preferred no involvement in funeral planning. One respondent preferred the alternative funeral plan but objected to building a coffin for the deceased. Tables 24-26 (in Appendix B) present the distribution of those

responding to these items according to sex, age, education, income, and religiousity.

In response to the item "What aspects of your church's alternative funeral do you consider most helpful to the bereaved?", forty-seven respondents (73.4 percent) listed religious aspects as either first, second, or third choice; fifty-six (71.9 percent) listed congregational support and involvement; forty-two respondents (65.7 percent) liked personal involvement in planning the funeral; seventeen (26.5 percent) indicated the burial of the body before the service; eleven (17.2 percent) considered private burial; nine (14.0 percent) indicated lack of expenditure; and eight (12.6 percent) indicated building the coffin for the deceased. Two respondents remarked that "a de-emphasis of the 'body' or physical aspect of the deceased" was helpful and that "a memorial service is not as depressing as a service where the body is present".

Although three-fourths of the respondents preferred the alternative funeral for themselves and for family members, the individual unique features of this plan were considered less helpful by a majority of the respondents. The percentages responding "less helpful" to individual items were: building a coffin for the deceased, 54.6 percent; burial of the body before the memorial service, 50.0 percent; lack of expenditure, 53.1 percent; private burial, 53.1 percent. Twelve respondents (18.7 percent) indicated congregational support, eleven respondents (17.2 percent)

indicated personal involvement in planning the funeral, and eight respondents (12.6 percent) indicated religious aspects of the funeral as less helpful. Table 4 is a composite summary of the numbers responding to the rank order 1=most helpful to 3=least helpful for the aspects of the alternative funeral. Tables 27-33 (in Appendix B) present the distribution of those responding to these items according to sex, age, education, income, and religiosity.

Significantly strong relationships existed among the individual aspects of the alternative funeral. A gamma of .8000 indicated a strong positive relationship between burial of the body prior to the service and lack of expenditure. A majority of the respondents to these items considered both aspects less helpful ($p=.0462$). Table 5 presents the statistical data.

Table 4

Responses to Aspects of the Alternative
Funeral by Rank Order

Aspect	Rank Order (1 = most helpful; 8 = least helpful)								Missing Observations
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Congregational Support	25	10	11	7	3	2	0	0	6
Religious Aspects	13	19	10	2	4	1	1	0	9
Personal Involvement	13	12	17	4	3	2	2	0	11
Burial of Body Before Service	2	8	7	6	11	11	4	0	15
Private Burial	1	6	4	10	8	11	5	0	19
Building a Coffin	1	4	3	14	2	2	15	2	21
Lack of Expenditure	0	2	7	7	11	9	7	0	21
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	60

Table 5

Relationship Between Aspects of Alternative Funeral:
Lack of Expenditure and Burial of Body Before Service

Burial of the body before the memorial service	Lack of Expenditure			
		More Helpful	Less Helpful	Total
	More Helpful	4 10.3%	6 15.4%	10 25.6%
	Less Helpful	2 5.1%	27 69.2%	29 74.4%
	Total	6 15.4%	33 84.6%	39 100%

Missing observations = 25

Chi square = 3.97488 with 1 degree of freedom

Significance = .0462

Gamma = .8000

A strong negative relationship was found between burial of the body prior to the service and congregational support and involvement ($\gamma = -.8560$) of the thirty-five respondents (76.1 percent) who indicated congregational support and involvement as helpful, twenty-nine (63.0 percent) considered burial of the body prior to the service as unhelpful ($p = .0018$). Statistical data is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Relationship Between Aspects of Alternative Funeral:
Congregational Support and Burial of Body Before Service

	Congregational Support			
		More Helpful	Less Helpful	Total
Burial of the body before the memorial service	More Helpful	6 13.0%	8 17.4%	14 30.4%
	Less Helpful	29 63.0%	3 6.5%	32 69.6%
	Total	35 76.1%	11 23.9%	46 100%

Missing observations = 18

Chi square = 9.79939 with 1 degree of freedom

Significance = .0018

Gamma = -.85600

When asked how they would describe the memorial service offered by their church for the deceased forty-four (68.8 percent) described the service as a celebration of life; forty-three (67.2 percent) described the service as worship and praise; twenty-three (35.9 percent) described the service as affirmation of death; and one (1.6 percent) described the memorial service as depressing. Six (9.4 percent) offered other descriptions for the memorial service such as: "Somewhat avoids human grief needs"; "We are going backwards by building coffins like the pioneers. What are we trying to prove? The church will soon need to go into the coffin building business!". Table 34 (in Appendix B) presents the

distribution of those responding to this item according to sex, age, education, income, and religiousity.

The alternative funeral plan increases the significance of the funeral for fifty-one (79.7 percent) respondents. Eleven (17.2 percent) did not believe that the alternative funeral increased the significance of the funeral and two (3.1 percent) did not answer the question. Table 35 (in Appendix B) presents the distribution of those responding to this item according to sex, age, education, income, and religiousity.

Sixty-five percent of the respondents who described the memorial service as a celebration of life also believed the alternative funeral increased the significance of the funeral to the bereaved. This relationship was significant at the .05 level ($p=.0404$), however, the relationship was somewhat weak ($\text{Lambda}=.11765$). Table 7 shows the statistical data.

Table 7

Relationship Between Significance of Alternative Funeral to Bereaved and Memorial Service as a Celebration of Life

Increases Significance of the Funeral			
	Yes	No	Total
Memorial service a celebration of life	39 65.0%	4 6.7%	43 71.7%
Memorial service not a celebration of life	11 18.3%	6 10.0%	17 28.3%
Total	50 83.3%	10 16.7%	60 100%

Chi square = 4.20246 with one degree of freedom
 Significance = .0463
 Lambda = .12500

Over half of the respondents who described the memorial service as worship and praise also believed that the alternative funeral provided the best structure which sanctions and enables working through one's grief, offered more support and strength for the bereaved, and preferred the alternative funeral plan for themselves and other family members or close friends. These items were significant at the .05 level. Tables 8,9,10, and 11 show the statistical data.

Table 8

Relationship Between Memorial Service as Worship and Praise
and Alternative Funeral as Sanctioning Grief Work

Best Plan Which Sanctions and Enables Working Through One's Grief				
	Alternative	Combination	Both	Total
Memorial service worship & praise	36 62.1%	4 6.9%	1 1.7%	42 71.2%
Memorial service not worship & praise	8 13.8%	9 15.5%	0 0%	17 28.8%
Total	45 76.3%	13 22.0%	1 1.7%	58 100%

Chi square = 13.04361 with 2 degrees of freedom
Significance = .0015
Lambda = .29412

Table 9

Relationship Between Memorial Service as Worship and Praise
and Alternative Funeral as Offering Support and Strength

		Funeral Plan Which Offers More Support and Strength			
		Alternative	Combination	Both	Total
Memorial Service Worship & Praise	Yes	37 62.7%	4 6.8%	1 1.7%	42 71.2%
	No	8 13.6%	9 15.3%	0 0%	17 28.8%
	Total	45 76.3%	13 22.0%	1 1.7%	59 100%

Chi square = 13.43006 with 2 degrees of freedom
Significance = .0012
Lambda = .29412

Table 10

Relationship Between Memorial Service as Worship and Praise
and Alternative Funeral as Personal Funeral Preference

		Personal Funeral Preference			
		Alternative	Combination	Both	Total
Memorial Service Worship & Praise	Yes	40 66.7%	2 3.3%	0 0%	42 70.0%
	No	9 15.0%	8 13.3%	1 1.7%	18 30.0%
	Total	49 81.7%	10 16.7%	1 1.7%	60 100%

Chi square = 17.39552 with 2 degrees of freedom
Significance = .0002
Lambda = .3889

Table 11

Relationship Between Memorial Service as Worship and Praise
and Alternative Funeral as Family Member Funeral Preference

	Funeral Preference for Family Member or Close Friend			
		Alternative	Combination	Total
Memorial Service Worship & Praise	Yes	36 59.0%	6 9.8%	42 68.9%
	No	10 16.4%	9 14.8%	19 31.1%
	Total	46 75.4%	15 24.6%	61 100%

Chi square = 6.04020 with one degree of freedom
Significance = .0140
Lambda = .15789

That the alternative funeral as a religious rite does bind the bereaved to the congregation was the opinion of fifty-five (85.9 percent) respondents. Four respondents (6.3 percent) did not believe the alternative funeral binds the bereaved to the congregation and five (7.8 percent) failed to respond. Table 37 (in Appendix B) presents the distribution of those responding to this item according to sex, age, education, income, and religiosity.

Forty-nine (76.6 percent) respondents had attended their church's alternative funeral service and forty-eight (75.0 percent) respondents would recommend the alternative funeral to people outside the congregation. Fourteen (21.9 percent) had not attended an alternative funeral and thirteen (20.3 percent) would not recommend the alternative plan to others. Tables 38 and 39 (in Appendix B) present the distribution of those responding to these items according to sex, age, education, income, and religiosity.

The alternative funeral had been used for family members by eight (12.5 percent) respondents while fifty-five (85.9 percent) had not used this plan for family members. Of the eight respondents who had used the alternative funeral service, six (75.0 percent) would recommend the service to people outside the congregation and two (25.0 percent) would not. Of those who had attended the alternative funeral service, eight (16.3 percent) had used the service for family members and forty-one (83.7 percent) had not. Table 40 (in Appendix B) presents the distribution of those

responding to these items according to sex, age, education, income, and religiousity.

The alternative funeral was preferred for family member's or close friends by 41.3 percent of the respondents with an income between \$13-25,000. In the \$26-50,000 income range 7.9 percent of the respondents preferred the combination funeral. This relationship was significant at the .05 level ($p=.0226$). A lambda of .13333, however, indicated the relationship was somewhat weak. Table 12 shows the statistical data.

Table 12

Relationship Between Annual Income and Funeral Preference

		Annual Income			
		\$5,000- 12,000	\$13,000 -25,000	\$26,000 -50,000	Total
Funeral preference for family member or close friend	Alternative	19 30.2%	26 41.3%	3 4.8%	48 76.2%
	Combination	4 6.3%	6 9.5%	5 7.9%	15 23.8%
	Total	23 36.5%	32 50.8%	8 12.7%	63 100%

Chi square = 7.57541 with 2 degrees of freedom
 Significance = .0226
 Lambda = .13333

A greater percentage (12.2 percent) of the respondents over 60 years of age considered the burial of the body before the memorial service helpful as compared to 28.6 percent of the respondents in both the 21-39 age range and the 40-59 age range who considered the burial of the body before the service unhelpful. This was significant at the .05 level ($p=.0387$). Table 13 shows the statistical data.

Table 13

Relationship of Age to Burial of Body Before Memorial Service

Burial of the body before memorial service	Age				
		21-39	40-59	Over 60	Total
	Helpful	2 4.1%	9 18.4%	6 12.2%	7 34.7%
	Unhelpful	14 28.6%	14 28.6%	4 8.2%	32 65.3%
	Total	16 32.7%	23 46.9%	10 20.4%	49 100%

Chi square = 6.50468 with 2 degrees of freedom
 Significance = .0387
 Gamma = .60656

When the respondents who indicated personal involvement in planning an alternative funeral as helpful were compared with respondents who desired a degree of involvement in planning a funeral for a family member or close friend there was a significant negative difference. Over half (51.9 percent) of the respondents who found the personal involvement unhelpful would like to be somewhat involved in planning the funeral for a family member or close friend. This was significant at the .05 level ($p=.013$). Table 14 shows the statistical data.

Table 14

Relationship Between Personal Involvement in Planning Alternative Funeral and Degree of Personal Involvement Considered Helpful

	Amount of Involvement Preferred			
		Very Much	Somewhat	Total
Personal involvement in planning an alternative funeral	Helpful	27 51.9%	14 26.9%	41 78.8%
	Unhelpful	2 3.8%	9 17.3%	11 21.2%
	Total	29 55.8%	23 44.2%	52 100%

Chi square = 6.17482 with 1 degree of freedom
 Significance = .013
 Gamma = -.79336

Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

Concomitant with the growing concern with death is an increased interest with grief and funerals which has brought about a growing disapproval toward the functions and functionaries associated with death. However, the critics of the conventional funeral practices are seeking funeral reform, not advocating the abolition of the funeral rite. Regardless of how valueless the conventional funeral has become there are few alternatives for the bereaved family. Proper disposal of the body must be considered and the recognition of a death must be made. Although many theoretical assumptions have been expounded by theorists claiming the value of funeral reform or of an alternative funeral plan, the writer found no empirical studies which measured either the benefits of a functional funeral service or the values of an alternative funeral plan.

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine the alternative funeral plan offered by the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite congregation in Wichita, Kansas. Specific objectives were:

1. To identify attitudes toward death, grief, and rituals surrounding death;

2. To examine specific aspects of the alternative funeral plan in relation to the value perceived by members of the congregation.

The types of funerals considered were the conventional, the alternative and the combination. These were defined as:

1. The conventional funeral--a service package purchased from a funeral home including a manufactured coffin, a public ceremony held in the funeral home with the body present, and a public burial.

2. The alternative funeral--the services offered by the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita, Kansas, consisting of a private burial followed by a public memorial held in the church and the option of building the coffin for the deceased.

3. The combination funeral--a service package purchased from a funeral home in which the body is present during a public or private service held in the church followed by the burial of the deceased.

Items on attitudes toward death adapted from studies by Shneidman (1971), Irion (1966), and Fulton (1967) were combined to form one questionnaire which was administered by the investigator to members of the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kansas, during regular Sunday services.

Responses from 31 males and 33 females provided data. The average respondent was of either sex, lived in the city, was between 40-59 years of age, was presently married for the first time and was a college graduate with an income of \$13,000 to \$25,000 annually. He or she was born into the

Mennonite faith, was involved actively in the Lorraine Avenue congregation having been a member for four or more years, but did not hold an office in the church. Data analysis included frequency distributions, cross tabulations, chi square tests of significance, and tests of strength. The level of significance was .05.

Respondents' attitudes concerning death were influenced by a variety of factors including religious upbringing, death of a loved one, introspection and meditation, and funeral rituals. Eighty-six percent felt that their religion played a significant role in the development of their present attitudes. Eighty percent of the respondents agreed that there has been an increase in the amount of concern with death in the United States in the last half century, although there was little agreement as to why. Only one-half of the respondents strongly believed in life after death and three-fourths strongly hoped that life after death was true. According to Shneidman (1971) a lesser percentage of his national survey agreed with these two items.

Ninety percent of the respondents were interested in having their image survive after death but there was no majority agreement on the disposal of the body. Burial, cremation, and donation to medical school each were preferred by about one-fourth of the respondents. About 20 percent were indifferent to the method of body disposal.

Death meant the termination of this life but with survival of the spirit for about 45 percent of the respondents.

This was a considerably higher percentage than the study by Shneidman (1971) in which 17 percent of the respondents held the same belief. An additional one-third of the responding Mennonite congregation felt death was a transition to a new beginning of life. In response to the item of consider your own death, two-thirds of the respondents felt pleasure in being alone. Others felt either fearful, depressed, discouraged, purposeless, or resolved to the fact in relation to life. Causing grief to relatives and friends was the most distasteful aspect of death for 25 percent of the respondents and a painful death was most distasteful for 20 percent.

Marking the death of an individual with a ceremony or ritual of some kind was considered important by 90 percent of the respondents. A like percentage felt that a funeral should provide a structure which sanctions grief and enables one to work through grief. Group participation in the funeral as a support and strength for the bereaved was valued by nearly all respondents, but a majority disapproved of the body lying in state in an open casket. The cost of funerals in the United States was considered very much overpriced by over 80 percent of the respondents. A similar percentage of Shneidman (1971) respondents disapproved of the body lying in state and agreed that funerals in the United States were very much overpriced.

Aspects of conventional or combination funerals which were considered to be most helpful by respondents were: Religious aspects, 81.3 percent; personal support from

community, 81.3 percent; personal choice as to degree of involvement in planning funeral, 62.5 percent; extra services provided by the mortuary, 14.5 percent; and positive affirmation of life and death, 6.9 percent. Less helpful aspects of conventional or combination funerals were public display of lavish concern, 51.7 percent; body present during service, 50.0 percent; extra services offered by mortuary, 50.0 percent; public burial, 48.0 percent; choice of degree of involvement in funeral planning, 10.9 percent; and personal support from community, 7.9 percent.

Three-fourths of the respondents have attended their church's alternative funeral service and one out of eight had had this plan for a family member. Over 70 percent felt the alternative funeral offered both the best structure for sanctioning and working through grief and the most support and strength for the bereaved in comparison to the combination funeral which was considered best by over twenty percent and the conventional funeral which was not considered valuable on these variables by the respondents.

Concerning the alternative funeral plan, a majority of the respondents believed that group participation is a support and strength for the bereaved, that congregational participation and the alternative funeral itself increase the significance of the funeral for the bereaved; and that the alternative funeral seen as a religious rite binds the bereaved to the congregation.

Although over 75 percent of the respondents preferred

the alternative funeral plan both for themselves and for close friends and/or family members and would recommend the service for people outside the congregation, the unique qualities of the alternative funeral, i.e. private burial of the body before the service and building a coffin for the deceased were not ranked as either first, second, or third choices as being most helpful by the respondents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings the following conclusions seem to be warranted:

1. The alternative funeral appears to be a more effective and functional funeral plan for this congregation on the variables: support from the congregation, religious aspects, and personal involvement in planning the funeral. However, the unique features of their plan, such as building the coffin, less expensive, and private burial before the memorial service were considered less helpful than the support derived from the congregation and the personal involvement in religious rites. It was not determined that respondents devalued the unique features only that they were ranked of lesser helpfulness.

2. Although the majority of the respondents indicated that similar aspects of both the conventional funeral and alternative funeral were helpful and that the unique features of the alternative funeral were less helpful, all of the respondents indicated that the alternative funeral or

combination plan offered more support and strength for the bereaved than the conventional funeral plan for themselves, family members or close friends. The majority of the respondents would recommend the alternative funeral to people outside the congregation, also. It was the investigator's conclusion that the alternative funeral is a more effective funeral plan because it affords the congregation an increased opportunity to participate in the service which, in turn, serves as a support and strength for the bereaved.

3. The respondents' attitudes concerning death, grief and rituals were different from attitudes expressed in a national survey (Shneidman, 1971). A contributing factor could be that the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite congregation considered themselves somewhat (60.9 percent) or very religious (37.5 percent) and felt pleasure in being alive when they think of their personal death (67.2 percent). In Shneidman's (1971) survey a smaller percentage considered themselves somewhat (37.0 percent) or very religious (11.0 percent) and felt pleasure in being alive (25.0 percent). These results appeared to concur with the finding (Lester, 1970; and Kalish, 1963) that religions serve as a means of confronting and reducing one's fear of death.

4. Fulton (1963) and Blackwell and Talarzyk (1974) indicated that 50 percent of their respondents believed that funerals should stay about the same as they are and that the funeral service does meet the emotional needs of the bereaved family. However, aside from membership in a memorial

organization, respondents had few alternatives to the conventional funeral service. Given an alternative, such as the one offered by the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, the percentage of respondents who were satisfied with conventional funerals might decrease. However, further research is needed to substantiate the investigator's views or explore whether the conventional funeral may afford the same degree of participation, support and strength for others.

Since this study dealt only with the attitudes of responding members of the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite congregation, further investigation into the attitudes of the general public concerning alternative funeral plans is needed for additional information on the comparative benefits of a functional funeral service and the value of an alternative funeral plan.

REFERENCES

- Blackwell, Roger D., and Wayne W. Talarzyk. American Attitudes Toward Death and Funerals. Sponsored by The Casket Manufacturers Association, Evanston, Illinois. Columbus: Management Horizons, 1974.
- Blake, Robert R. "Attitudes Toward Death as a Function of Developmental Stages," Dissertation Abstracts, 1970, 30B, 3380B.
- Blauner, Robert. "Death and Social Structure," Psychiatry, 1966, 29, 378-94.
- Campbell, Ernest. "Death as a Social Practice," Perspectives on Death, ed. Liston O. Mills, 1969, 209.
- Collett, L. J., and Lester D. Collett. "The Fear of Death of the Fear of Dying," Journal of Psychology, 1969, 72, 179-181.
- Forest, Jack D. "The Major Emphasis of the Funeral," Pastoral Psychology, 1963, 14, 19-24.
- Fulton, Robert. A Compilation of Studies of Attitudes Toward Death, Funerals and Funeral Directors. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1971.
- . "Death, Grief and Social Recuperation," Omega, 1970, 1, 23-28.
- . The Sacred and the Secular Attitudes of the American Public Toward Death. Milwaukee: Bulfin, 1963.
- . "Death and the Self," Journal of Religion and Health, 1964, 3, 359-368.
- Goldburgh, Stephen J., Charel B. Rotman, John R. Snibbe, and Jack W. Ondrack. "Attitudes of College Students Toward Personal Death," Adolescence, 1967, 2, 211-229.
- Gorer, Geoffrey. "Death, Grief, and Mourning," Sociological Symposium, 1968, 1, 94.
- Greenberg, I. M., and I. E. Alexander. "Some Correlations of Thoughts and Feelings Concerning Death," New York Hillside Journal, 1962, 11, 120-126.

- Harmer, Mulvey Ruth. "Response and Rebuttal," Omega, 1971, 2, 150.
- Howard, Alan, and Robert A. Scott. "Cultural Values and Attitudes Toward Death," Journal of Existentialism, 1965 and 1966, 6, 161-174.
- Irion, Paul E. The Funeral: Vestige or Value. New York: Abingdon Press, 1966.
- Kalish, Richard A. "An Approach to the Study of Death Attitudes," American Behavioral Scientist, 1963, 6, 68-70.
- Kastenbaum, Robert, and Ruth Aisenberg. The Psychology of Death. New York: Springer Publishing Co., Inc., 1972.
- Krupp, George R. "The Bereavement Reaction: A Special Case of Separation Anxiety Sociocultural Considerations," The Psychoanalytic Study of Society, 1962, 42-74.
- Lamers, William M. Jr. "Funerals are Good for People M.D.s Included," Medical Economics, 1965, 46, 303-314.
- Lamm, Maurice, and Naftali Esbries. "Viewing the Remains: A New American Custom," Journal of Religion and Health, 1966, 5, 137-143.
- Lane, W. W. "Ritual and the Expression of Emotion in Public Worship," Dissertation Abstracts, 1970, 30, 4011A-4012A.
- Lester, David. "Studies on Death Attitude Scales," Psychological Reports, 1969, 24, 182.
- _____. "Sex Differences in Attitudes Toward Death: A Replication," Psychological Reports, 1971, 28, 754.
- _____. "Relation of Fear of Death in Subjects to Fear of Death in Their Parents," Psychological Record, 1970a, 20, 541-543.
- _____. "Religious Behavior and the Fear of Death," Omega, 1970, 1, 189-200.
- _____. "Inconsistency in the Fear of Death of Individuals," Psychological Reports, 1967a, 20, 1084.
- _____. "Fear of Death of Suicidal Persons," Psychological Reports, 1967a, 20, 1077-1078.
- Lester, David, and Elizabeth G. Kam. "Effect of a Friend Dying Upon Attitudes Toward Death," Journal of Social Psychology, 1971, 83, 149-150.
- Martin, David and others. "The Relationship between Religions Behavior and Concern about Death," Journal of Social Psychology, 1965, 65, 317-323.

Maurer, Adah. "Adolescent Attitudes toward Death," Journal of Genetic Psychology, 1964, 105, 75-90.

Peniston, D. H. "The Importance of Death Education in Family Life," Family Life Coordinator, 1962, 11, 1518.

Shneidman, Edwin S. "You and Death," Psychology Today, 1973, 5, 43.

Templer, Donald I, Carol F. Ruff, and Cyril M. Franks.
"Death Anxiety, Age, Sex, and Parental Resemblance in Diverse Populations," Developmental Psychology, 1971, 4, 108.

APPENDIX A

SUBJECT CONSENT FORM

SUBJECT'S NAME: _____

SUBJECT'S ADDRESS: _____
_____PERSONNEL: Dr. Betsy Bergen, K.S.U.
(The Responsible Individual)

Mr. Robert R. Williams, K.S.U.

I, _____, being of sound mind and _____
(Name of Subject)

years of age, do hereby consent to and authorize the persons named above (and the agents, employees and fellow employees of each of them) to undertake the proposed investigation identified and explained in the document entitled:

"Attitudes on Death, Grief, and Funerals"
which document dated December, 1974, is attached to and is hereby made a part of this consent.

I have read the attached document, referred to above, and I have been fully advised of the procedures of this investigation and the sensitivity of the topic.

Signed at Wichita, Kansas this _____ day of _____ 1974

Witnessed By:

(Subject)_____
(Church Official)_____
(Signature of guardian if
subject under 18 years of
age)_____
(Church Official)

ATTITUDES ON DEATH, GRIEF, AND FUNERALS

We are extremely interested in your attitudes toward death, grief, and the rituals associated with death. Please take your time and be frank and honest in answering the following questions. It is not our intention to invade your privacy or cause undue anxiety about this topic. We hope that this study will help you to look at your beliefs more closely and help your church evaluate ways it is meeting the special needs of its members in times of crisis. Due to the sensitive topic of this study, you may withdraw your consent and participation in the study at any time. All information will be strictly confidential. The results of this study will be made available to your congregation upon its completion.

In this study we refer to three types of funeral services; the conventional, the alternative, and the combination. These three funeral plans are defined as follows:

1. The conventional funeral is a service package purchased from a funeral home including a manufactured coffin, a public ceremony with the body present, held in the funeral home, followed by the burial of the body.
2. The alternative funeral is the service offered by your church consisting of a private burial followed by a public memorial held in the church and the option of building a coffin for the deceased.

3. The combination funeral is a service package purchased from a funeral home where the body is present during a public or private service held in the church, followed by the burial of the deceased.

PROCEDURE FOR RETURNING QUESTIONNAIRE AND CONSENT FORM

Attached to the questionnaire is a Consent Form. Please read this form carefully. If you consent to participate in this study, please sign your name at the bottom of the Consent Form. After you have completed the questionnaire please return it, along with the Consent Form, to the church office window at the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church. There are two boxes outside the church office window; one marked "Consent Forms", the other box is marked "Questionnaire". Place the Consent Form and the questionnaire in their respective boxes. This will guarantee you anonymity. Please return the Consent Form and the questionnaire no later than Sunday, December 29, 1974.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Dr. Betsy Bergen
Assistant Professor
Kansas State University

Robert R. Williams
Graduate Student
Kansas State University

Directions: Circle the number of the answer you choose.
Please answer only once unless otherwise indicated.

1. Which of the following has most influenced your present attitudes toward death?
 1. Death of someone close
 2. Specific reading
 3. Religious upbringing
 4. Introspection and meditation
 5. Ritual (e.g., funerals)
 6. TV, radio, or motion pictures
 7. Longevity of my family
 8. My health or physical condition
2. How much of a role has religion played in the development of your attitude toward death?
 1. A very significant role
 2. A rather significant role
 3. Somewhat influential, but not a major role
 4. A relatively minor role
 5. No role at all
3. To what extent do you believe in life after death?
 1. Strongly believe in it
 2. Tend to believe in it
 3. Uncertain
 4. Tend to doubt it
 5. Convinced it does not exist
4. Regardless of your belief about life after death, what is your wish about it?
 1. I strongly wish there was life after death
 2. I am indifferent as to whether there is life after death
 3. I definitely prefer that there not be life after death

5. What does death mean to you?

1. The end; the final process of life
 2. The beginning of life after death; a transition, a new beginning
 3. A joining of the spirit with a universal cosmic consciousness
 4. A kind of endless sleep; rest and peace
 5. Termination of this life but with survival of the spirit
 6. Don't know
 7. Other (specify) _____
-

6. What aspect of your own death would be most distasteful to you?

1. I could no longer have any experiences
2. I am afraid of what might happen to my body after death
3. I am uncertain as to what might happen to me if there is a life after death.
4. I could no longer provide for my dependents
5. It would cause grief to my relatives and friends
6. All my plans and projects would come to an end
7. The process of dying might be painful

7. Which of the following do you most often feel when you think of your own death, or when circumstances make you realize your own mortality? (please check all that apply)

- ☐ Fearful
☐ Discouraged
☐ Depressed
☐ Purposeless
☐ Resolved, in relation to life
☐ Pleasure in being alive
☐ Other (specify) _____
-

8. Do you believe that there has been an increase in the amount of concern with death in the U.S. in the last 25 to 50 years?

1. Yes
2. No

IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 8 WAS YES, PLEASE CONTINUE WITH QUESTION 9.

IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 8 WAS NO, PLEASE GO ON TO QUESTION 10.

9. Which one of the following do you feel contributed most to the increase in concern with death in the U.S., within the last 25 to 50 years?

1. Wars
 2. National violence (riots, increased crime rate, kidnapping, hijacks, etc.)
 3. Pollution of the environment
 4. Atomic and nuclear bombs
 5. Existential philosophy (a 20th Century philosophy that stresses the freedom, responsibility, and subjective experiences of the individual. One is not free to die until one is free to live)
 6. The drug culture
 7. Television and other mass media
 8. Medical advances
 9. Other (specify) _____
-

10. To what extent are you interested in having your image survive after your own death, through your children, books, good works, etc?

1. Very interested
2. Moderately interested
3. Somewhat interested
4. Not very interested
5. Totally uninterested

11. Do you believe it is important to mark the death of an individual with a ceremony or ritual of some kind?

1. Yes
2. No

12. How important do you believe such customs as wakes and funerals are for the survivors?

1. Extremely important
2. Somewhat important
3. Undecided or don't know
4. Not very important
5. Not important at all

13. In general, how do you feel about the custom of "lying in state" in an open casket?
1. Approve
 2. Don't care one way or the other
 3. Disapprove
 4. Strongly disapprove
14. What is your opinion about the costs of funerals in the U.S. today?
1. Very much overpriced
 2. No one has to pay for what he doesn't want
 3. In terms of costs and services rendered, prices are reasonable
15. Have you had a recent personal involvement with death (within two years)?
1. Yes
 2. No

IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 15 WAS YES, PLEASE CONTINUE WITH QUESTIONS 16-19.

IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 15 WAS NO, PLEASE GO ON TO QUESTION 20.

16. With whom was your most recent personal involvement with death?
1. Spouse
 2. Grandparent or great-grandparent
 3. Parent
 4. Brother or sister
 5. Other family member (aunts, uncles, niece, nephew, in-laws, step-relationships, etc.)
 6. Friend or acquaintance
 7. Stranger or public figure
 8. Other (specify) _____
-
17. How recent was this personal involvement with death?
1. Within the past 6 months
 2. Within the past year
 3. Over one year ago
 4. Two years ago
18. Were you involved in the actual planning of the funeral?
1. Very much involved
 2. Not very involved
 3. I was not involved at all

19. How could you describe this funeral?

1. Conventional (a service package purchased from a funeral home including a manufactured coffin, a service in the funeral home, the body present during the service, and followed by the burial of the deceased).
2. Alternative (the service offered by your church including a private burial followed by a public memorial with the option of building a coffin for the deceased).
3. Combination (a service package purchased from a mortuary including a manufactured coffin, the body present during a service held in the church followed by the burial of the deceased).

20. Please number in order (1=most helpful) what aspects of the conventional or combination funeral you consider helpful to the bereaved.

- ☐ The public display of lavish concern for deceased
- ☐ The body present during the service
- ☐ Personal support from the community
- ☐ Your choice as to degree of involvement in funeral planning
- ☐ The extra services offered by the mortuary (manufactured coffin, flower service, limousine service, etc.)
- ☐ Public burial
- ☐ Religious aspects
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

21. Please number in order of what aspects of your church's alternative funeral you consider helpful to the bereaved.

- ☐ Building the coffin for the deceased
- ☐ Burial of the body before the memorial service
- ☐ Congregational support and involvement
- ☐ Lack of expenditure
- ☐ Personal involvement in planning the funeral
- ☐ Private burial
- ☐ Religious aspects
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

22. How would you describe the memorial service offered by your church for the deceased? (Please check all that apply.)
1. Affirmation of death
 2. Celebration of life
 3. Depressing
 4. Marking the transition to a new life
 5. Worship and praise
 6. Other (specify) _____
-
23. Do you believe that one of the main purposes of a funeral should be to provide a structure which sanctions and enables working through your own grief?
1. Yes
 2. No
24. Which of the funeral plans (conventional, alternative, combination) provides the best structure which sanctions and enables working through one's grief?
1. Conventional
 2. Alternative
 3. Combination
25. In your opinion, which one of the funeral plans (conventional, alternative, combination) offers more support and strength for the bereaved?
1. Conventional
 2. Alternative
 3. Combination
26. Do you believe that your church's alternative funeral plan increases the significance of the funeral?
1. Yes
 2. No
27. Do you believe that group participation is a support and strength for the bereaved?
1. Yes
 2. No
28. Do you believe that your congregation's participation in the alternative funeral, increases the significance of the funeral to the bereaved?
1. Yes
 2. No

29. Is it your opinion that the alternative funeral as a religious rite binds the bereaved to the congregation?
1. Yes
 2. No
30. If it were entirely up to you, how would you like to have your body disposed of after you have died?
1. Burial
 2. Cremation
 3. Donation to medical school or science
 4. I am indifferent
31. What kind of a funeral would you prefer for yourself?
1. Conventional (a service package purchased from a funeral home including a manufactured coffin, a service in the funeral home, the body present during the service, and followed by the burial of the body).
 2. Alternative (the service offered by your church including a private burial followed by a public memorial with the option of building a coffin for the deceased).
 3. Combination (a service package purchased from a funeral home including the purchase of a manufactured coffin, the body present during a service held in the church followed by the burial of the body).
 4. Other (specify) _____

32. What kind of funeral would you prefer for another member of your family or a close friend?
1. Conventional
 2. Alternative
 3. Combination
33. How involved would you like to be in the planning of a funeral for a family member or a close friend?
1. Very much involved
 2. Somewhat involved
 3. Not involved at all
34. Have you attended an alternative funeral service, in your church?
1. Yes
 2. No

35. Has your church's alternative funeral service been used for a member of your family?
1. Yes
 2. No
36. Would you recommend the alternative funeral to people outside the congregation?
1. Yes
 2. No
37. At what age did you join the Mennonite faith?
1. I was born into the faith
 2. I joined as a child (12 years and under)
 3. I joined as a youth (13-21 years of age)
 4. I joined as an adult (over 21 years of age)
 5. I am not a Mennonite
38. How long have you been a member of the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite congregation?
1. Less than one year
 2. Over one year
 3. Two to four years
 4. Over four years
 5. All my life
 6. I am not a member of the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church
39. Would you consider yourself actively involved in this congregation (do you attend services on a regular basis, do you participate in church activities)?
1. Yes
 2. No
40. Do you or a member of your family hold an office in the church?
1. I hold an office in the church
 2. A member of my family holds an office in the church
 3. Neither myself, nor a member of my family holds an office in this church
 4. Both 1 and 2
41. How religious do you consider yourself to be?
1. Very religious
 2. Somewhat religious
 3. Not at all religious
 4. Anti-religious

42. What is your sex?

1. Male
2. Female

43. What is your age?

1. Under 21
2. From 21 to 29
3. From 30-39
4. From 40-59
5. Over 60

44. What is your marital status?

1. Single, never married
2. Presently married for the first time
3. Remarried
4. Separated or divorced
5. Widowed

45. What is your level of education?

1. Grade school
2. High school graduate
3. Some college
4. College graduate
5. M.S., M.A., Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree

46. What is the approximate annual income of your family?

1. Less than \$5,000
2. From \$5,000 to \$12,000
3. From \$13,000 to \$25,000
4. From \$26,000 to \$50,000
5. Over \$50,000

47. In what area do you live?

1. City
2. Rural

48. What effect has this questionnaire had on you?

1. It has made me somewhat anxious or upset
 2. It has made me think about my own death
 3. It has reminded me how fragile and precious life is
 4. No effect at all
 5. Other effects (specify) _____
-

APPENDIX B

Table 15

Distribution Concerning Public Display of Lavish Concern for the Deceased
of those Responding to this Item. N=37

	SEX			AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE	21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEBHAP		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
More Helpful	4	10.8	0	2	5.4	1	2.7	1	2.7	0	0.0	1	2.7	3	8.1	2	5.4	2	5.4	0	0.0	1	2.7	3	8.1	0	0.0
Less Helpful	15	40.5	18	12	32.4	19	51.4	2	5.4	7	18.9	16	43.2	10	27.0	10	27.0	16	43.2	7	18.9	13	35.1	20	54.1	0	0.0

Table 16

Distribution Concerning the Body Present During the Service
of those Responding to this Item. N=35

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	1	2.9	2	5.7	1	2.9	2	5.7	0	0.0	2	5.7	0	0.0	1	2.9	0	0.0	3	8.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	8.6	0	0.0
Unhelpful	16	45.7	16	45.7	13	37.1	17	48.6	2	5.7	7	20.0	14	40.0	11	31.4	10	28.6	15	42.9	7	20.0	13	37.1	19	54.3	0	0.0

Table 17

Distribution Concerning Personal Support from the Community
of those Responding to this Item. N=57

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	25	43.9	27	47.4	20	35.1	22	38.6	10	17.5	12	21.1	24	42.1	16	28.1	21	36.3	23	40.4	8	14.0	22	38.6	29	50.9	1	1.8
Unhelpful	3	5.3	2	3.5	0	0.0	5	8.8	0	0.0	2	3.5	1	1.8	2	3.5	0	0.0	5	8.8	0	0.0	1	1.8	4	7.0	0	0.0

Table 18

Distribution Concerning Choice as to Degree of Involvement in Funeral Planning
of those Responding to this Item. N=47

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	18	38.3	22	46.8	15	31.9	21	44.7	4	8.5	7	14.9	20	42.6	13	27.7	16	34.0	18	38.3	6	12.8	17	36.2	23	48.9	0	0.0
Unhelpful	6	12.8	1	2.1	3	6.4	2	4.3	2	4.3	2	4.3	2	4.3	3	6.4	3	6.4	3	6.4	1	2.1	2	4.3	5	10.6	0	0.0

Table 19

Distribution Concerning Extra Services Offered by the Mortuary
of those Responding to this Item. N=40

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEBUT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	5	12.5	3	7.5	2	5.0	6	15.0	0	0.0	4	10.0	3	7.5	1	2.5	2	5.0	5	12.5	1	2.5	0	0.0	8	20.0	0	0.0
Unhelpful	16	40.0	16	40.0	12	30.0	16	40.0	4	10.0	6	15.0	14	35.0	12	30.0	11	27.5	15	37.5	6	15.0	15	37.5	17	42.5	0	0.0

Table 20

Distribution Concerning Public Burial
of those Responding to this Item. N=31

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMETHING		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	1	3.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.2	0	0.0
Unhelpful	14	45.2	16	51.6	11	35.5	17	54.8	2	6.5	8	25.8	11	35.5	11	35.5	8	25.8	16	51.6	6	19.4	13	41.9	17	54.8	0	0.0

Table 21

Distribution Concerning Religious Aspects
of those Responding to this Item. N=52

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	25	46.3	27	50.0	19	35.2	24	44.4	9	16.7	13	24.1	21	38.9	18	33.3	20	37.0	24	44.4	8	14.8	21	38.9	31	57.4	0	0.0
Unhelpful	1	1.9	1	1.9	0	0.0	2	3.7	0	0.0	1	1.9	1	1.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.7	0	0.0

Table 22

Distribution Concerning Funeral Plan Which Provides Best Structure
of those Responding to this Item. N=60

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEBET		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Conventional	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Alternative	20	33.3	25	41.7	14	23.3	21	35.0	10	16.7	9	15.0	24	40.0	12	20.0	19	31.7	22	36.7	24	6.7	17	28.3	27	45.0	0	0.0
Combination	8	13.3	6	10.0	4	6.7	7	11.7	3	5.0	7	11.7	2	3.3	5	8.3	4	6.7	7	11.7	3	5.0	4	6.7	10	16.7	0	0.0
Both	0	0.0	1	1.7	1	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.7	1	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0

Table 23

Distribution Concerning Which Funeral Plan Offers More Support and Strength
of those Responding to this Item. N=61

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Conventional	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Alternative	19	31.1	27	44.3	16	26.2	20	32.8	10	16.4	9	14.8	24	39.3	13	21.3	20	32.8	21	34.4	5	8.2	19	31.1	26	42.6	1	1.6
Combination	9	14.8	5	8.2	3	4.9	8	13.1	3	4.9	7	11.5	2	3.3	5	8.2	3	4.9	9	14.8	2	3.3	3	4.9	11	8.0	0	0.0
Both	0	0.0	1	1.6	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.6	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0

Table 24

Distribution Concerning Funeral Preference For Family Member or Close Friend
of those Responding to this Item. N=63

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Conventional	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Alternative	21	33.3	27	42.9	17	27.0	23	36.5	8	12.7	9	14.5	24	38.1	15	23.8	19	30.2	26	42.3	3	4.8	18	28.6	29	45.0	1	1.6
Combination	10	15.9	5	7.9	4	6.3	7	11.1	4	6.3	7	11.1	4	6.3	4	6.3	4	6.3	6	9.5	5	7.9	6	9.5	9	14.3	0	0.0

Table 25

Distribution Concerning Personal Funeral Preference
of those Responding to this Item. N=62

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Conventional	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Alternative	22	37.1	29	46.8	17	27.4	25	40.3	10	14.5	9	14.5	5	38.7	18	29.0	20	30.6	27	43.5	5	8.1	20	32.3	30	48.4	1	1.6
Combination	6	9.7	4	6.5	3	4.8	5	8.1	2	3.2	6	9.7	3	4.8	1	1.6	2	3.2	5	8.1	3	4.8	3	4.8	7	11.3	0	0.0
Both	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0

Table 26

Distribution Concerning Amount of Involvement in Planning a Funeral
of those Responding to this Item. N=63

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very Much	13	20.6	21	33.3	9	14.3	17	27.0	8	12.7	7	11.1	16	25.4	11	17.5	13	20.6	14	22.2	7	11.1	17	27.0	17	27.0	0	0.0
Somewhat	17	27.0	10	15.9	12	19.0	12	19.0	3	4.8	9	14.3	10	15.9	8	12.7	9	14.3	17	27.0	1	1.6	7	11.1	19	30.2	1	1.6
Not at All	1	1.6	1	1.6	0	0.0	1	1.6	1	1.6	0	0.0	2	3.2	0	0.0	1	1.6	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.2	0	0.0

Table 27
Distribution Concerning Religious Aspects
of those Responding to this Item. N=55

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEBHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	24	43.6	23	41.8	17	30.9	21	38.2	9	16.4	14	25.5	20	36.4	13	23.6	18	32.7	22	40.0	7	12.7	17	30.9	30	54.5	0	0.0
Unhelpful	2	3.6	6	10.9	1	1.8	7	12.7	0	0.0	1	1.8	3	5.5	4	7.3	3	5.5	4	7.3	1	1.8	3	5.5	5	9.1	0	0.0

Table 28

Distribution Concerning Congregational Support and Involvement
of those Responding to this Item. N=58

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	23	39.7	23	39.7	18	31.0	22	37.9	6	10.3	12	20.7	19	32.8	15	25.9	19	32.8	23	39.7	4	6.9	20	34.5	25	43.1	1	1.7
Unhelpful	5	8.6	7	12.1	1	1.7	8	13.8	3	5.2	3	5.2	7	12.1	2	3.4	3	5.2	5	8.6	4	6.9	3	5.2	9	15.5	0	0.0

Table 29

Distribution Concerning Personal Involvement In Planning Funeral
of those Responding to this Item. N-53

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	18	34.0	24	45.3	15	28.3	22	41.5	5	9.4	11	20.8	20	37.7	11	20.8	18	34.0	18	34.0	16	11.3	17	32.1	24	45.3	1	1.9
Unhelpful	7	13.2	4	7.5	4	7.5	5	9.4	2	3.8	2	3.8	4	7.5	5	9.4	4	7.5	6	11.3	1	1.9	4	7.5	7	13.2	0	0.0

Table 30

Distribution Concerning Burial of the Body Before Memorial Service
of those Responding to this Item. N=49

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	6	12.2	11	22.4	2	4.1	9	18.4	6	12.2	4	8.2	7	14.3	6	12.2	7	14.3	8	16.3	2	4.1	6	12.2	11	22.4	0	0.0
Unhelpful	16	32.7	16	32.7	14	28.6	14	28.6	4	8.2	5	10.2	17	34.7	10	20.4	12	24.5	16	32.7	4	8.2	15	34.7	17	30.6	0	0.0

Table 31

Distribution Concerning Private Burial
of those Responding to this Item. N=45

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-50		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEBIT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	5	11.1	6	13.3	3	6.7	5	11.1	3	6.7	1	2.2	7	15.6	3	6.7	5	11.1	5	11.1	1	2.2	4	8.9	7	15.6	0	0.0
Unhelpful	15	33.3	19	42.2	15	33.3	15	33.3	4	8.9	6	13.3	16	35.6	12	26.7	14	31.1	16	35.6	4	8.9	14	31.1	19	42.2	1	2.2

Table 32

Distribution Concerning Lack of Expenditure
of those Responding to this Item. N=43

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMETHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	2	4.7	7	16.3	3	7.0	4	9.3	2	4.7	2	4.7	5	11.6	2	4.7	5	11.6	4	9.3	0	0.0	5	11.6	4	9.3	0	0.0
Unhelpful	15	34.9	19	44.2	13	30.2	18	41.9	3	7.0	5	11.6	18	41.9	11	25.6	13	30.2	16	37.2	5	11.6	15	34.9	19	44.2	0	0.0

Table 33

Distribution Concerning Building the Coffin for the Deceased
of those Responding to this Item. N=43

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12, 000		13-25, 000		26-50, 000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helpful	6	14.0	2	4.7	2	4.7	4	9.3	2	4.7	3	7.0	4	9.3	1	2.3	1	2.3	5	11.6	2	4.7	1	2.3	6	14.0	1	2.3
Unhelpful	15	34.9	20	46.5	14	32.6	17	39.5	4	9.3	4	9.3	19	44.2	12	27.9	16	37.2	15	34.9	4	9.3	17	39.5	18	41.9	0	0.0

Table 34

Distribution Concerning Description of Memorial Service
of those Responding to this Item

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Affirmation of Death N=23	9	14.5	14	22.6	8	12.9	10	16.1	5	8.1	4	6.5	11	17.7	8	12.9	12	19.4	9	14.5	2	3.2	11	17.7	11	17.7	1	1.6
Celebration of Life N=44	20	32.3	24	38.7	13	21.0	22	35.5	9	14.5	9	14.5	21	33.9	14	22.6	17	27.4	21	33.9	6	9.7	17	27.4	26	41.9	1	1.6
Depressing N=1	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
Marking the Transition to a New Life N=30	16	25.8	14	22.6	11	17.7	12	19.4	7	11.3	8	12.9	10	16.1	12	19.4	13	21.0	11	17.7	6	9.7	13	21.0	17	27.4	0	0.0
Worship and Praise N=43	20	32.3	23	37.1	13	21.0	20	32.3	10	16.1	8	12.9	19	30.6	16	25.8	19	30.6	20	32.3	4	6.5	21	33.9	21	33.9	1	1.6

Table 35

Distribution Concerning Whether Alternative Funeral Plan Increases Significance
of those Responding to this Item. N=62

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEBETW		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	23	37.1	28	45.2	17	27.4	23	37.1	11	17.7	10	16.1	25	40.3	16	25.8	20	32.3	25	40.3	6	9.7	19	30.6	31	50.0	1	1.6
No	6	9.7	5	8.1	3	4.8	6	9.7	2	3.2	5	8.1	3	4.8	3	4.8	3	4.8	6	9.7	2	3.2	4	6.5	7	11.3	0	0.0

Table 36

Distribution Concerning Whether Congregation's Participation Increases
Significance of the Funeral of those Responding to this Item. N=63

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	23	44.4	30	47.6	19	30.2	26	41.3	13	20.6	12	19.0	29	46.0	17	27.0	23	36.5	29	46.0	6	9.5	22	34.9	35	55.6	1	1.6
No	2	3.2	3	4.8	1	1.6	4	6.3	0	0.0	4	6.3	0	0.0	1	1.6	1	1.6	2	3.2	2	3.2	2	3.2	3	4.8	0	0.0

Table 37

Distribution Concerning Whether Alternative Funeral as Religious Rite
Binds Bereaved to Congregation of those Responding to this item. N-59

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	26	44.1	29	49.2	18	30.5	25	42.4	12	20.3	12	20.3	26	44.1	17	28.8	24	40.7	26	44.1	5	8.5	20	33.9	35	59.3	0	0.0
No	2	3.4	2	3.4	0	0.9	4	6.8	0	0.0	4	6.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.4	2	3.4	1	5.1	3	1.7	0	0.0

Table 38

Distribution Concerning Attendance of Alternative Funeral Service
of those Responding to this Item. N=63

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEWHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	24	38.1	25	39.1	7	11.1	29	46.0	13	20.6	13	20.6	20	31.7	1	25.4	16	25.4	25	39.7	8	12.7	18	28.6	30	47.6	1	1.6
No	7	11.1	7	11.1	13	20.6	1	1.6	0	0.0	3	4.8	8	12.7	3	4.8	7	11.1	7	11.1	0	0.0	6	9.5	8	12.7	0	0.0

Table 39

Distribution Concerning Recommendation of Alternate Funeral to Others
of those Responding to this Item. N=61

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMETHAT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	23	37.7	25	41.0	16	26.2	23	37.7	9	14.8	8	13.1	25	41.0	15	24.6	20	32.8	24	39.3	4	6.6	19	31.1	28	45.9	1	1.6
No	7	11.5	6	9.8	4	6.6	6	9.8	3	4.9	7	11.5	2	3.3	4	6.6	2	3.3	7	11.5	4	6.6	5	8.2	8	13.1	0	0.0

Table 40
Distribution Concerning Use of Alternative Funeral for Family Member
of those Responding to this Item. N=63

ITEM	SEX				AGE						EDUCATION						INCOME						RELIGIOSITY					
	MALE		FEMALE		21-39		40-60		Over 60		HIGHS		COLLEGE		ADVANCED		5-12,000		13-25,000		26-50,000		VERY		SOMEBUT		NOT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	3	4.8	5	7.9	0	0.0	3	4.8	5	7.9	3	4.8	3	4.8	2	3.2	3	4.8	3	4.8	2	3.2	5	7.9	3	4.8	0	0.0
No	28	44.4	27	42.9	20	31.7	27	42.9	38	12.7	13	20.6	25	39.7	17	27.0	20	31.7	29	46.0	6	9.5	19	30.2	35	55.6	1	1.6

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF AN ALTERNATIVE FUNERAL PLAN

by

ROBERT REECE WILLIAMS

B.A., Washburn University, 1973

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1975

Many theoretical assumptions have been espoused claiming the value of funeral reform or of an alternative funeral plan. Research has been limited in the area of measuring the benefits of a functional funeral service or the values of an alternative funeral plan.

This descriptive study was designed to measure the effectiveness of the alternative funeral plan offered by the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite congregation in Wichita, Kansas. Three types of funerals were considered:

1. Conventional - a service package purchased from a funeral home including a manufactured coffin, a public ceremony held in the funeral home with the body present, and a public burial;
2. Alternative - the services offered by the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita, Kansas, consisting of a private burial followed by a public memorial held in the church and the option of building the coffin for the deceased;
3. Combination - a service package purchased from a funeral home in which the body is present during a public or private service held in the church followed by the burial of the deceased.

Data were obtained from 31 male and 33 female members of the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite congregation. The average respondent was either male or female, lived in the city, was between 40-59 years of age, was presently married for the first time, and was a college graduate with an income of \$13,000 to \$25,000 annually. He or she was born into the

Mennonite faith, was involved actively in the congregation having been a member for four or more years, but did not hold an office in the church.

A questionnaire adapted from Sneiderman (1971), Irion (1966), and Fulton (1964) was used to measure attitudes concerning death and funerals and appraisal of the alternative funeral plan.

Respondents' attitudes concerning death were influenced by a variety of factors including religious upbringing, death of a loved one, introspection and meditation, and funeral rituals. Eighty-six percent felt that their religion played a significant role in the development of their present attitudes. Over one-half of the respondents strongly believed in life after death and three-fourths strongly hoped that life after death was true. Eighty percent agreed that there has been an increase in the amount of concern with death in the last half century, although there was little agreement as to why.

Death meant the termination of this life but with survival of the spirit for nearly one-half of the respondents. Two-thirds of the respondents indicated pleasure in being alive. Ninety percent were interested in having their image survive after death, but there was no majority agreement on disposal of their body. Although the cost of funerals in the United States was considered very much overpriced, marking the death of an individual with a ritual of some kind was considered important by 90 percent of the respondents.

Aspects of the conventional or combination funerals

which were considered most helpful were religious aspects, personal support from community, and personal choice as to degree of involvement in planning. Unhelpful aspects were public display of lavish concern, body present during service, extra services offered by the mortuary, and public burial.

Concerning the alternative funeral plan, group participation was seen as support and strength for the bereaved, as increasing the significance of the funeral for the bereaved, and as a religious rite binding the bereaved to the congregation. Although over seventy-five percent preferred the alternative funeral plan for both themselves and for family members and friends and would recommend the service for others, the unique qualities of the service, i.e., private burial of the body before the service and building a coffin for the deceased, were not considered helpful to the bereaved.

Significant differences were found at the .05 level between: (1) the helpfulness of the lack of expenditure and the burial of the body before the service; (2) congregational support and strength and the burial of the body before the service; (3) amount of involvement preferred in planning a funeral and the helpfulness of this personal involvement; (4) those who described the memorial service as a celebration of life and those who believed that the alternative funeral increases the significance of the funeral to the bereaved; and (5) those who described the memorial service as worship and praise and the funeral plan which offered more support and strength, personal funeral preference, and preference for

family members.

The following conclusions were drawn:

1. The congregation placed a high premium on support for the bereaved, be it community, congregational, or otherwise.

2. The alternative funeral appeared to be more effective in providing support despite the unhelpfulness of unique features.

3. Group participation in the funeral is a support and strength for the mourner, binds the mourner to the congregation, and increases the value of the funeral for the mourner.