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Cover: When children die, the grief and isolation of the grandparents can be devastating but is often not recognised. Miri Nehari, Dorit Grebler and Amos Toren's support for this group (p51) gives rise to some important insights.

Photo by Rosie Dalzell with grateful thanks to Daphne Cotton and Andrew Willoughby

IT IS NOT SURPRISING that the relatively young field of bereavement study has mainly focused its attention on primary kinship relationships and on delineating 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' ways of grieving. In this edition of *Bereavement Care* two papers consider disenfranchised mourners; children bereaved by suicide, and grandparents. Our third paper explores and reframes bereaved people's use of mediums, often dismissed as evidence of avoiding 'letting go' of the deceased.

Simone presents qualitative data from interviews with adults bereaved by suicide in childhood. Her findings confirm those of previous studies, that it is not the event of suicide per se that is important but the way in which families manage this traumatic event, with open communication being of prime importance. Those of us who are working with parents are reminded of the importance of helping them to consider how they are recognising their children's needs and how they are parenting while dealing with their own loss. I look forward to reading more from this important study.

Nehari, Grebler and Toren describe a support group for bereaved grandparents. Drawing on data collected during group sessions they present main themes using three dimensions; societal/cultural, family and personal. Across these dimensions they present evidence that grandparents are in a difficult place with no clear role and often excluded as members of the nuclear family struggle with handling their own grief. This small study adds useful insights to our understanding of cross-generational responses to the death of a child and invites others to investigate further.

As in many other countries, it is not uncommon for mourners in Britain to occasionally visit mediums. Walter draws on participant observation in spiritualist churches in England and interviews with bereavement counsellors to cast new light on this activity. He analyses his findings from a cultural/societal perspective and suggests that mediums' messages resonate with dominant norms, celebrate love as eternal and challenge the notion that we should leave the dead behind. Within a framework of continuing bonds such contacts with the dead can be conceptualised as 'normal' rather than problematic.

In this edition we are also indebted to our reporters 'on the spot' in Melbourne, Australia, who eloquently provide highlights of their individual experiences of the Eighth International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society. Their report underlines the important role of these conferences in bringing together key thinkers and diverse perspectives from around the globe. It suggests we should all be trying to attend the next conference in the USA in 2011. ●

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