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A LEGACY OF LOSS: STORIES OF REPLACEMENT DYNAMICS AND THE SUBSEQUENT CHILD

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ABSTRACT

This article, a qualitative exploration of the experiences of subsequent children, endeavors to clarify common issues and experiences of this population. Subsequent children, also known as subsequent siblings, are children born after the death of a brother or sister. For this study, 25 adult subsequent siblings participated in semi-structured interviews. Few researchers have written about this population, and much of what has been documented was researched from single case studies, or from very small samples. This study aims to explore the commonalities of the unique experience of being a subsequent child. Themes which emerged include various replacement child dynamics, impaired bonding with parents or altered parenting as a result of the loss, family grief and its repercussions, meaning making and spiritual questioning, fantasies about the lost sibling, disenfranchised and unresolved grief, taking on a caregiver role, and survivor guilt. The implications for clinical practice are presented.

INTRODUCTION

Whereas an abundance of clinical and societal attention has been given to siblings who survive the loss of a brother or sister, our awareness of the experience of subsequent siblings is minimal. The current literature about subsequent children is sparse, and more research is needed (Etchegoyen, 1997; O'Leary, Gaziano &

Thorwick, 2006; Turton, Badenhorst, Pawlby, White & Hughes, 2009; Wheeler, 2000). Much of what has been documented regarding subsequent children has been researched from single case studies (Porot & Portelli, 1993; Reid, 1992, 2003) or from very small samples (O'Leary et al., 2006; Sabbadini, 1988.) The perspective of many articles is rooted in pathology, as the cases were referred from psychiatric settings or from subjects who were seeking therapy (Cain & Cain, 1964; Sabbadini, 1988). Some case studies were derived from Holocaust survivors and their families, and authors focused upon the transgenerational transmission of loss which occurred in the Holocaust as well as in families with subsequent children (Anisfeld & Richards, 2000; Kogan, 2003; Schwab, 2009). Other studies have gathered data from the vantage point of the parents of subsequent children (Grout & Romanoff, 2000; Powell, 1995; Wheeler, 2000). Grout and Romanoff point out in their conclusion that more exploration is needed, and that "we also need to hear the stories of the siblings" (p. 111, 2000).

The clinical literature reports that subsequent siblings confront various consequences due to their subsequent role; their birth order and status may greatly impact their identity formation and social reality. When born to parents with unresolved bereavement, disturbances in bonding and in the early parent-child relationship may ensue (Etchegoyen, 1997; Legg & Sherick, 1976; Reid, 1992; Wheeler, 2000). The hopes and expectations which were previously assigned to the deceased child may be transferred to the subsequent sibling, with possibly hazardous consequences for the identity formation of the subsequent child (Cain & Cain, 1964; Legg & Sherick, 1976). Replacement dynamics can cause a developmental interference, negatively impinging on a subsequent child by making demands that surpass the coping capacities of their immature ego (Legg & Sherick, 1976). Subsequent siblings can be prone to survivor's guilt (Anisfeld & Richards, 2000; Etchegoyen, 1997) and a transgenerational transmission of grief and traumatic loss may take place (Leon, 1986; Schwab, 2009). A subsequent child's identity traits and life choices may be influenced by their role as a subsequent; they appear to be inclined toward caregiver roles (Leon, 1986; O'Leary et al., 2006; Schwab, 2009) and to have a tendency for morbid preoccupations (Cain & Cain, 1964). Like other bereaved groups, subsequent children may seek meaning as they attempt to assimilate the loss (Neimeyer, Prigerson & Davies, 2002). I will now elaborate on some of these themes as they merit more thought before discussing the study findings.

The Replacement Child

Researchers have commonly defined replacement children as subsequent siblings who are conceived either with an intention to replace their lost sibling, or who are expected, consciously or unconsciously, to replace their deceased predecessor and to fill the void of their absence (Cain & Cain, 1964; Legg & Sherick, 1976). Cain and Cain (1964) illustrate in their case studies that when parents have

not fully mourned for their deceased child, they risk idealizing the lost child and placing expectations upon a subsequent baby to fill the void and become a substitute. The replacement child's ability to feel accepted and to form her own identity is then negatively impacted. Subsequent siblings are sometimes born into a climate of acute mourning, in which their parents are seeking to replace their deceased child by having another baby. In these cases, "the 'new' object is brought into existence almost exclusively as part of an attempt to retain or regain the lost object, and the parents' relationship with the new, substitute child is virtually smothered by the image of the lost child" (Cain & Cain, 1964, p. 453). As a result, replacement children face a parental dynamic in which their deceased sibling is idealized, and in which they are predestined to disappoint. "The child born after a loss may carry the burdens of the expectations held for the baby who died and live in the shadow of never being quite good enough or always striving to be perfect to meet the expectations of their parents" (Wheeler, 2000, p. 321).

The majority of the clinical literature concerning replacement children speaks solely of the frequent idealization of the deceased child. However, Powell's research (1995) found that some bereaved mothers chose to idealize the subsequent child instead of the deceased. Grout and Romanoff (2000) discovered that for some bereaved parents, their subsequent child filled the empty space of their loss, and that their subsequent child became the personification of their needs and wishes. Both Powell and Grout and Romanoff's findings indicate that some replacement children are idealized, a phenomena which I refer to as "gift children" and will further elaborate upon.

Additional Potential Obstacles and Repercussions

The death of a child has an enormous impact upon a family, altering its structure and relationships. Kempson, Conley, and Murdock point out the many profound results of a child's death, stating that it "affects family dynamics, stories, career choices, and even other siblings' perceived reasons for being" (2008, p. 273). The lives of the parents and of the family are forever changed (Schwab, 1997). The parenting abilities and style of bereaved parents may therefore be affected by their experience of loss. Some subsequent siblings may encounter challenges in bonding with their parents. "As the replacement baby becomes more responsive to the mother, it may not be uncommon for her to withdraw from him. The parents, finding that the new infant has done little to resolve their grief, and that his presence has become conflictual for them, may retreat to activities outside the home" (Legg & Shreick, 1976, p. 119). Parents might resist bonding with their child as they fear the possibility of another loss; they might become overprotective (Gibbons, 1992; Wheeler, 2000), overindulgent (Wheeler, 2000), or physically abusive (Etchegoyen, 1997; Leon, 1986; Reid, 1992). Children are greatly influenced by their family's ability or struggle to cope with a death (Bowlby, 1980).

Subsequent children commonly conclude that their birth might have been dependent upon the death of their brother or sister (Reid, 1992) which can lead them to be susceptible to survivor guilt (Johnson, 1989; Schwab, 2009).

If someone else has to die so that I could live, I must have caused that person's death, and I will then be haunted by the rival I have slain. . . . Indeed, this is precisely what it means to be a survivor—to be forced to wonder why fate took someone else's life instead of one's own." (Anisfeld & Richards, 2000, pp. 314-315)

Cain and Cain (1964) elaborate further that some of the bereaved parents seemed unconsciously to blame the subsequent child for the death of her predecessor; this unconscious but present blame would certainly contribute to feelings of survivor guilt in the subsequent child. Subsequent siblings may additionally share a predisposition for morbid preoccupations.

Almost outdoing their parents, they were particularly interested in cemeteries, funeral homes, pictures of hurricane devastation, neighborhood graves of animals. They talked and inquired about deaths at great length. (Cain & Cain, 1964, p. 450)

As they were born after the death of their brother or sister, subsequent children may often experience disenfranchised grief and a loss which is unrecognized. Disenfranchised grief has been defined as situations in which people are "not accorded a right to grieve . . . their grief is not openly acknowledged, socially validated, or publicly observed" (Doka, 2002, p. 5). One of the case studies described by Sabbadini (1988) clearly portrays a subsequent sibling's sense of disenfranchised grief. After speaking of her deceased brother, she "burst into the most desperate sobbing and then confessed that never before had she had a chance of mourning her brother" (p. 544). One can conclude that the minimal literature about this population is another example of their disenfranchised status.

Researchers have additionally pointed out that subsequent children may face a transgenerational transmission of grief, loss, and trauma (Kempson et al., 2008; Schwab, 2009). A family pattern of morbid grieving is handed down from one generation to another when unresolved grief occurs (Lieberman, 1979). Unresolved grief will be defined in this article as

the intensification of grief to the level where the person is overwhelmed, resorts to maladaptive behavior, or remains interminably in the state of grief without progression of the mourning process towards completion. . . . [It] involves processes that do not move progressively toward assimilation or accommodation but, instead, lead to stereotyped repetitions or extensive interruptions of healing." (Horowitz, Wilner, Marmar, & Krupnick, 1980, p. 1157)

Schwab (2009) explains that when subsequent children are the recipients of a transgenerational transmission of trauma and loss "they are haunted by a death that

they did not directly experience. The experience of death comes to them secondhand, so to speak, through its impact on the parents” (p. 286). Subsequent children who inherit loss through intergenerational transmission face the daunting task of attempting to master an event which occurred before their birth and to integrate it into their life stories. Schwab (2009) comments upon

the troubled question of how children “remember” events that they have received secondhand from their parents . . . the recipients of transgenerational trauma need to patch a history together that they have never lived by using whatever props they can find, including photographs, and stories or letters. (pp. 281-282)

Secrecy may be a common obstacle in this quest, as illustrated in Sabbadini’s subsequent sibling case study; she describes a “veil of silence, with its undertones of guilt, that surrounded the family” (1988, p. 533). As the attainment of understanding about the loss can promote healing for subsequent children (Schwab, 2009) a search for clarity is a logical and necessary response for a subsequent child who contends with the transgenerational transmission of grief.

Like some grieving parents who idealize their dead child, the clinical literature indicates that subsequent children may be prone to idealizing their lost sibling and to favorable fantasies, in which they imagine that the deceased sibling would have filled a void in their lives in some way, as a helper, confidante, or friend (Leon, 1986; Reid, 1992; Schwab, 2009). These fantasies seem to represent one polarity of a subsequent child’s feelings towards their predecessor. The other polarity is that of tacit competition and sibling rivalry; however, it is difficult to compete with the dead (Cain & Cain, 1964; Sabbadini, 1988; Schwab, 2009). Cain and Cain sum up an impossible struggle.

Amidst the guilt-laden inexpressible rage aroused in the substitute child by incessant comparison with his invincible dead rival, he was asked not only to mourn but even to join in the idealization of his competitor. (1964, p. 451)

We can conclude that subsequent children may often harbor highly contradictory feelings towards their deceased siblings, and that idealization might be easily voiced while resentment and rage may be underlying and unspoken.

Some of the case studies in the clinical literature document that subsequent siblings, as adults, have chosen professions in caregiving fields (Leon, 1986; O’Leary et al., 2006; Schwab, 2009). Leon’s case study (1986) illustrates that for some subsequent siblings a job in a helping profession might be a way to cope with survivor guilt, or an attempt to revisit indirectly and master the loss of their sibling. Cain and Cain (1964) advise careful scrutiny of caregiving work, as some of it, especially when it is related to the nature of the mourned death, may be a sign of unresolved grief. O’Leary, Gaziano, and Thorwick (2006), on the other hand, point out that a choice to work in a helping role might be a sign and means of healing and health for subsequent siblings.

A Search for Meaning and Integration of the Loss

When confronted with loss, the bereaved often search for meaning. They attempt to organize their experiences of loss into a comprehensive narrative, integrating the loss into their life stories and honoring its significance as a life altering event (Neimeyer et al., 2002). Finding meaning after a loss seems to be a crucial component of successful adjustment (Grout & Romanoff, 2000). The stories told in the present study indicate that many subsequent siblings are not exempt from this struggle and quest for meaning, and that they share the traits of other bereaved groups, demonstrating a frequent need for meaning making, spiritual questioning, and for the integration of their sibling's death into their own life narratives.

Those who grieve for a loved one often share a common question, "What do I do with my manifold thoughts and feelings about that person?" (Nickman, Silverman, & Normand, 1998, p. 132). One of the struggles of mourning is to find a way to maintain a connection to the deceased while also continuing to invest in the present. Some find meaning through carrying their loved one forward, a concept which entails honoring the memory of the deceased by striving to maintain their presence, importance, and legacy through memory or action, such as the completion of good deeds or accomplishments in their name. It can provide the bereaved with a symbolic opportunity to integrate the deceased into their lives in an ongoing manner, and to maintain a connection; for some, it can also be an attempt to atone for the fact that the deceased is gone while they are still alive. Klass (1997) describes this concept as an integration of the inner representation of the deceased into one's inner and social worlds. Writer DeVita-Raeburn (2004), who lost a brother herself and who interviewed other bereaved siblings, explained some of the underlying reasons for carrying a sibling forward.

We try to carry our siblings forward because they are part of our identities. . . . We do it because it can feel too disorienting and disloyal to move forward and leave our siblings behind. . . . We carry them forward because in order for us to go forward with our own lives, whole, unhampered by guilt at having been the one chosen to survive, we often need them to come too. And so we find a way.

The drive to carry a sibling forward seems to apply both to subsequent siblings as well as to surviving siblings who have experienced a loss.

The Present Study

The current report is a qualitative exploration of the experiences of subsequent siblings, to deepen our understanding of the impact of being in this role. This article presents the findings from a fairly large and diverse sample, to build upon to the scant clinical literature which has been researched from smaller samples and individual case studies. This study aims systematically to explore the commonalities and contrasts of the unique experience of being a subsequent sibling.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION AND METHODS

The current article is a qualitative study, which was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. The author recruited 25 participants (Table 1) in New York City and in New Jersey, through newspaper advertisements, flyers, and the Internet. Participation criteria was that prior to their birth, subjects had lost a sibling, that the deceased sibling was a full term baby (no miscarriages or abortions), that the subject was able to speak English fluently, and that the subject was willing to participate and discuss issues pertaining to their role as a subsequent sibling. All participants received oral and written information about the study before giving their written consent to participate, and they were compensated with a small sum (\$10) for their time.

Subjects partook in an interview with the author, which consisted of a list of questions; many questions were open ended, to allow for free expression. The interviews lasted from 1 to 2 hours. A drawing component was included, in which participants were asked to draw an image of a family. Due to space limitations, the findings from the art component will not be fully discussed here, but will be reviewed in a future art therapy article. Interviews took place at a quiet location of the participant's choosing. They were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

A grounded theory approach was selected because it supports the primary goal of this study, which is to give voice to a group that has rarely spoken for itself. Rather than beginning with a hypothesis, the author collected data from the subjects and allowed common themes to emerge organically from the interviews, in hopes of capturing the authentic voice of this group with minimal preconceived notions. Care was taken to build a rapport and reciprocity in the interview process, as recommended in Hesse-Biber and Leavy's protocol for in-depth interviews (2011).

Charmaz's (2006) suggestions for grounded theory interviewing were followed in the creation of questions; questions were in-depth and open-ended, permitting participants to share and reflect upon experiences which are rarely discussed and to elaborate upon their personal meaning. Ending questions were geared towards providing a positive sense of closure. To minimize bias, the author sought in-depth feedback about the interview questions and structure from various professional sources, including a published qualitative researcher.

Emergent themes were identified in the interview transcripts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Coding followed Charmaz's guidelines (2006). Initial coding was conducted; these provisional codes followed the data closely and had the goal of remaining as open as possible to all potential theoretical directions as indicated by the data. Focused coding was the second step, in which the most pronounced and significant categories of the overall data were identified and developed. The author used Charmaz's recommended technique of memo-writing (2006) throughout the coding process, to assist with the analysis of data. Analytic notes were jotted down to deepen and expand upon the author's exploration of the data and its meanings. Peer debriefing was ongoing throughout the research process.

Table 1. Table of Subjects

Name	Age	Gender	Race	Religious Affiliation	Age of deceased sibling at time of death	Gender of dead sibling	Cause of sibling's death	Time elapsed between sibling's death and subject's birth
Alan	59	Male	Caucasian	Catholic	2.5 years	Female	Drunk driver	8 years
Andrew	29	Male	Caucasian	Catholic	3 years	Male	Drowning	2 years
Angelo	42	Male	Hispanic	Catholic	3 years	Male	Drunk driver	7 years
Brigit	60	Female	Mixed Race	Catholic	Died at birth	Female	Stillborn	10 years
Candace	55	Female	Caucasian	Jewish	~6 months	Female	SIDS	3 years
Dana	25	Female	African American	Christian AME Zion	2 weeks	Male	Complications at birth	10 years
Daniel	64	Male	Caucasian	Catholic	1 day	Male	Complications at birth	1 year
Denise	38	Female	Hispanic	Christian	2 years	Female	Leukemia	4 years
Dierdre	31	Female	Caucasian	No Religion	11 months	Male	SIDS and medical malpractice	2 years
Edwin	23	Male	African	Christian	3 days	Male	Complications at birth	1 year
Gregory	45	Male	African American	Pentecostal	1 year	Male	SIDS	7 years

Jane	44	Female	Caucasian	Atheist	9 years	Female	Rare Autoimmune disease	3 years
Jenna	43	Female	African American	Christian	Died at birth	Male	Stillborn	2 years
Karen	30	Female	Caucasian	Spiritual	3 months	Male	SIDS	13 years
Kate	25	Female	Caucasian	Catholic	3 days	Male	Uncertain/ Complications at birth	1.5 years
Lana	54	Female	Caribbean	Episcopal	20 years	Female	Pneumonia	1 year
Marisol	44	Female	Caribbean	Catholic/Muslim	~3 months	Unknown	Unknown	1 year
Martin	33	Male	Caucasian	Christian	4 years	Female	Leukemia	1.5 years
Michael	28	Male	Native American	No Religion	2 years	Male	Unknown/Poor health	2 years
Natalie	33	Female	Mixed Race	Spiritual	3 years	Female	Drowning	4 months
Paulina	54	Female	Hispanic	Catholic	~3 days	Male	Mom was injured during pregnancy	5 years
Peter	45	Male	Caucasian	Jewish	8 years	Female	Leukemia	1 year
Rebecca	61	Female	Hispanic	Catholic	9 months	Female	Intestinal Virus	1.5 years
Sally	56	Female	Caucasian	Spiritual	~5.5 years	Male	Water related accident	4 years
Tanya	38	Female	Mixed Race	Spiritual	7 months	Male	Spina bifida	3 years

Continuous collaboration with others was also utilized to foster reflexivity; due to the interpretive and sensitive nature of this research, the author took a reflexive stance both before and during the research process, and the author's own background and its potential influence upon the research, the questions asked, and the interpretation of data were regularly explored and processed.

The sample was highly diverse, comprising nine men (36%) and sixteen women (64%). Eleven subjects (44%) identified themselves as Caucasian, four (16%) as Hispanic, three (12%) as African American, three (12%) as mixed race, two (8%) as Caribbean, one (4%) as Native American, and one (4%) as African. The age of the participants spanned a 41-year range, from 23 years to 64 years; the mean age was 42.3 and the standard deviation was 12.8. The age range of the deceased siblings was from stillborn to age 20, with a mean of 2.7 and a standard deviation of 4.4. Subjects reported that the time which elapsed between the death of their sibling and their own birth fell into a range of 4 months to 13 years, with a mean of 3.8 and a standard deviation of 3.4. The genders of the deceased siblings were 10 girls (40%), 14 boys (56%), and one (4%) unknown. Thirteen (52%) of the subjects were the same gender as their deceased sibling; 11 (44%) were the opposite sex of their deceased sibling, and one (4%) was unknown. Religious affiliation was reported as eight (32%) Catholic, four (16%) Spiritual, four (16%) Christian, three (12%) Atheist/ no religion, two (8%) Jewish, one (4%) Christian AME Zion, one (4%) Pentecostal, one (4%) Episcopal, and one (4%) Catholic and Muslim.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Emergent themes are discussed under the broad headings of replacement dynamics, transformed families and transformed roles, and the quest to assimilate the loss and related themes. The names of all subjects have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

Replacement Dynamics

Two types of replacement child dynamics emerged as the histories of subjects were reviewed. Some participants recollected being embraced and sometimes rewarded in their family as a "positive replacement" for their deceased sibling. These subjects will be referred to as "gift children," as their parents conveyed to them that their birth was a blessing which helped to make the family whole again. They were often given a preferential status in their families. On the opposite end of the continuum, other subjects recalled their ongoing sense of being a disappointing substitute for their deceased sibling, and remembered being negatively compared to their lost sibling by their parents. Their experience matches much of the clinical literature's depiction of the replacement child syndrome. In this article they will be referred to as "inadequate replacement children."

Participants in both of these camps were replacements, but the reception and messages which they received were quite different. In both scenarios, idealization took place: the gift children were idealized and seen as the ones destined successfully to repair the family, whereas the inadequate replacement children could not measure up to their predecessors in their parents' eyes, and their deceased siblings were the idealized ones. Subjects from both factions struggled, to varying degrees, to be accepted for who they were and to form identities which were independent of their lost siblings. Despite being welcomed and favored, gift children faced underlying pressure to heal the family, and several subjects in that group recalled feelings of anxiety about maintaining their statuses as "successful" replacements, and pressure to uphold their parents' ideals.

The Inadequate Replacement

Several subjects reported that they felt like inadequate substitutes, who were unable to measure up to their predecessor.

He was the boy my Mom always wanted. I was a planned but unwanted child. My Dad did not want a girl. He wanted a boy, and my Mom did too, because of losing my brother. (Sally)

My sister was exactly the way my Mother would want her little girl to be. She was very feminine, and very quiet. Already my Mother had enrolled her in dance classes. My Mother was a dancer . . . I was more of a Tomboy. (Natalie)

Some participants portrayed scenarios in which family decisions reinforced the stature of the subsequent sibling as second best. In one home, which was not spacious, the deceased child's bedroom was left unoccupied as a shrine.

My sister's room was kept exactly the same way. I shared a room with my brother. (Natalie)

Subjects additionally stated that at times they were negatively compared to their deceased siblings. The examples of their predecessors were used to push or pressure them toward desired behaviors or traits.

There were always little anecdotes about things my sister had said. I felt, as time went on, that my Mother started embellishing the anecdotes, like making her say things that a three-year-old would not say. Just things about her clothes, or how neat she kept her room . . . whereas I was the total opposite. (Natalie)

My sister was described as being very smart. My Mother kept saying that for someone in 2nd grade, she was very smart. Unlike me. My Mom called me a moron growing up. She didn't realize. Maybe she said it 3 times, but it seemed like 100. (Peter)

Some of these subjects rebelled against the pressure to replace their lost siblings. Natalie, for example, refused to take dance lessons, and her identification as a

Tomboy can be understood as a rebellion against the feminine, dancer ideal held up by her mother and embodied by her sister.

It [my Sister's death and the ensuing family dynamics] made me very determined from a early age not to be anybody else. There was even a time when I didn't like certain foods, and my Mother would say oh, your sister didn't like that either. So I would force myself to eat it. Because I did not want to be [identified with her.] (Natalie)

The Gift Child

Some subjects described a favored rapport with one or both parents which they attributed to their role as subsequent siblings. They explained that as they filled a void for their parents, they were rewarded with extra love and attention, and that their parents felt grateful and blessed by their birth. For the purpose of this article, I will call this group of subsequent siblings "Gift Children." These subjects felt like successful replacements for their lost siblings, and they were well received by their parents. In most of their families, the deceased sibling reportedly took up very little psychic space, and they, as the "gift child," became the center of the parents' attention. However, their role did carry underlying complexities and burdens. They all shared the sense of having gained additional love and indulging because of their sibling's death.

My parents let me know, we love you very much; you're our child. There was no comparison, ever. I was doted on. Everything was about me. (Candace)

My Mother went and prayed to God that she would have another daughter. She actually believed like I was a gift. So she did have a thing with me. . . . It made me feel like I was a little special. (Rebecca)

These "gift children," to varying degrees, described a status in their family as the idealized child. Many expressed an awareness of the benefits which they gained because of their sibling's death.

I was the only kid on the block, or the only kid in the house, I should say. And I was getting perks out of it. There were advantages that were happening. (Daniel)

I think if anything, it [my sibling's death] benefited me as an individual . . . not to sound selfish, but . . . I liked the fact that it was just me. (Tanya)

Conflicting emotions and ambivalence about being in the role of "the gift child" were sometimes revealed as the interview progressed. Feelings of competition with the deceased sibling were hinted at by some subjects, as well as underlying guilt about the benefits reaped because of their sibling's death. Most of the subjects in this study seemed well defended against feelings of guilt and rivalry, and they were expressed indirectly or with hesitancy. Candace, for example, opened up late in the interview to reveal some of the downsides of her role as the gift child,

which contrasted with her initial sunny depiction of her family life. Her comment about blame is noteworthy, as blame and guilt are common characteristics of familial replacement dynamics.

The worst thing was that I had no one to play with, and no one to blame. I was lonely, and spoiled. (Candace)

The gratifications of the gift child role are coupled with underlying pressures. Gift children are expected to fill a void, and they are rewarded for doing so. Some subjects speculated that this role impacted their identity formation, and that their childhood behaviors and interests may have been fueled by a drive to appease their parents and to successfully fill the void.

If I had an older brother, maybe things would have been a little different, because I was a Tom-boy growing up, and my Dad always coached my little league teams. If there had been a boy, maybe I would have been more girlie. (Tanya)

Additionally, some subjects appeared to fear becoming the “inadequate replacement,” even if that never transpired; they seemed to experience ongoing pressure to be a good replacement.

I feel like if I was lazy or irresponsible or not hardworking, that I would be like the son they never wanted. I had to live up to what my brother’s standards would have been. (Andrew)

Several subjects described a rebellion against the pressures of the gift child role. Guilt about rebelling was expressed as well.

I was so much taken care of, in a way that I don’t want . . . so I left [moving far away]. At that point I was behaving badly. I said that was enough. I wanted to be myself. (Edwin)

I was a miserable teenager. I was a terror as a teenager, a hellion. . . . Throughout my life I felt horrible about being a very difficult teen. In my 30’s I became a caretaker for both of my parents [until they died]. I still don’t feel like I made it up to them for my teen rebellion, however. (Candace)

Nevertheless, a few subjects never rebelled, and even as adults they seemingly embraced their role as gift children. One subject’s wish that she had been given her dead sister’s name pointed to her investment in being a replacement.

My Mother, she wanted another girl. She had to replace her. Obviously she named me something else. I would have loved that [my sister’s] name . . . that would have been such a nice name. (Rebecca)

Transformed Families and Transformed Roles

In addition to replacement dynamics, subjects described other parental traits and dynamics in their families which, they speculated, were also a result of the impact of their siblings' death.

The Caregiver Role

When describing their role in their families, 13 subjects characterized themselves as caretakers. Many participants chose caregiving vocations as well; 10 were employed in the helping professions, and 2 subjects volunteered weekly for charities. Their inclination for caregiving can be partially understood in the context of replacement dynamics, and in the subsequent siblings' frequent focus upon repairing their families. Survivor guilt may promote caregiving tendencies as well; perhaps they are unconsciously drawn to doing good deeds to prove themselves worthy of survivorship. Several subjects commented that they believe themselves to be sensitive people who are highly attuned to the needs of others. This data indicates that caregiving may be imprinted in the identity formation of subsequent siblings, becoming a lifelong identity trait. Many subjects gave conclusive accounts of their roles as caregivers in their families.

I'm the peacemaker in my family, the one who is always trying to make everything OK, the one that's like the therapist, the one that if someone needs advice they are going to call, the one that's going to fix stuff, the one that's going to hold it together, the glue, the staple, definitely the band-aid of the family. (Denise)

Each one in my family plays a different role, and I often feel like I am the negotiator. I was always trying to calm my sisters down . . . you never wanted to make my Mother cry, because there was always so much pain there. I do feel very responsible for my parents. I have been thinking about how, when they get older, I'm going to help support them. (Andrew)

Some subjects revealed that as adults they experienced ongoing worry and guilt about their parents, and demonstrated that they continued to think about the impact of their siblings' death upon their parents as they made life decisions.

I have lived here all my life, as have my parents, and [now] I'm moving away. . . . I'm excited, because I think it's going to be great, but I feel very choked up and it's hard for me to leave my parents . . . it occurs to me that maybe I have some feelings that they already lost one child . . . it might be more difficult for them to have another daughter move away. They might be more needy because of the loss experienced with my sister. (Jane)

As they reflected upon the impact of being a subsequent child, several participants divulged that they are highly sensitive people, and attributed it to their birth into a bereaved family.

I think that I am more attuned to heartache in people. . . . I think I am a very sensitive person. (Andrew)

I can always tell when someone has something on their mind that they are not talking about. Like if someone is tense. . . . I can always tell if there is something in the background . . . because there was always something in the background when I was a kid. (Natalie)

Altered Parenting and Parental Relationships

It was not uncommon for subjects to wonder about how their family lives and relationships might have been different, and possibly better, if their sibling were alive. Many mused about how deeply impacted their parents were from losing a child, and about how their relationships with their parents were subsequently affected.

I wonder. If not for my brother's death, they probably would have had us younger, and I wonder how that would have been different. Maybe my Mom would have talked to me more. Maybe we would have been closer. (Dana)

Some subjects reported experiencing impaired bonding with their mothers. They guessed that after losing one child, their Moms may have been fearful of losing another, and thus were afraid of becoming attached to their subsequent child.

This is my own personal theory. My Mom and I have a lot of problems, and I think it is because she was not secure that I was going to live. I can imagine that's how anyone would be. If you lose one child, suddenly your whole perspective of life changes, and you wonder, well is this [next child] going to live? I think during her whole pregnancy she didn't really bond with me . . . and now I have a horrible relationship with my Mom. (Jenna)

Many subjects reported that in response to the loss, their parents became overprotective.

They were very overprotective . . . to the point that I got annoyed. I couldn't swim because I might go into the water and drown. Even with a bicycle, they said I couldn't ride because I might hurt myself. (Edwin)

Several participants voiced a belief that their parents were forever changed or damaged by the loss.

My Mom never recovered. She says that there is something empty inside her body. That the pain can never be described. (Angelo)

I think that it [my sibling's death] sent them both over the deep end, and they haven't been back since. (Dierdre)

Many participants alluded to the lessons which they internalized through witnessing their parents' coping process. Some were greatly inspired by their parents'

ability to move forward, despite the tragedy in the family. Others spoke with regret about more negative lessons learned.

My parents are scared to death of everything. It's horrible. They gave it to us [me and my siblings] . . . like a fear of dogs, and driving at night, and lightning. (Jenna)

I was affected by how they adjusted. It taught me. Things happen, you must go on and live for today. . . . How my parents reacted was important. They were partying, celebrating life always. Her death did not change that, I don't think. It reinforced it. They were very resourceful people. (Alan)

Family Grief and Its Repercussions

Subsequent children are born after a tragedy and a trauma has taken place in their families, and their parents' grief, grieving style, and coping capacities will impact them deeply. A transgenerational transmission of the loss may take place when mourning is unresolved. It is obviously not simple to find a healthy balance of how much familial focus there "should" be upon the lost sibling; each family member might have a different comfort level, mourning style, and need. It is challenging for a family unit to commemorate the deceased sibling enough so that family members feel that the deceased is adequately recognized while also making sure that the loss does not become overbearing and an impediment to the family's abilities for bonding, fulfillment, and investment in the present.

Some subjects revealed that their siblings' deaths were given more focus and space than was ideal for them. Jane, for example, explained that during her sister's illness a group of artists drew pictures for her to raise her spirits, and the pictures were framed and hung. Jane's bedroom was later filled with these pictures; she estimated that about 12 of them were on her bedroom walls throughout her childhood. Many were inscribed to her deceased sister.

I think my Mother may have gone a little overboard. . . . I just remember growing up, I felt like, Jesus, I can't get away from this . . . people come to the house and [ask about the pictures] and I have to say that she was my sister who died, and it's like, do we have to keep talking about this all the time? I think they could have put the paintings away for a while, or maybe not had so many around. (Jane)

Another subject expressed discomfort at her mother's tendency to make the loss very public.

I feel like my Mother worked it in [the topic of my sister's death] whenever somebody didn't know the story. Like if someone was mentioning the Grand Canyon, she would say oh, we were planning a trip like that when I had my first daughter. And the people would ask, your first daughter? It's like she wanted everyone to know. (Natalie)

However, some subjects were relieved and glad to have their deceased siblings spoken of and remembered often.

I think it was good for us that he was kind of remembered and not put away somewhere. . . . My brother was never forgotten about. (Andrew)

Other subjects expressed a sense that the loss was not present enough or discussed enough, and seemed to feel guilt that their siblings were a bit forgotten by the family unit.

My first concern was, does he have a grave stone? Because I thought that was important, to remember him by. My parents were sort of like no, or they weren't sure. . . . I just wanted to know. My parents sort of forgot about it after the fact. Moved on. (Michael)

This range of responses demonstrates the complexity of integrating the child into the family's collective identity in a way that honors the child's memory while also allowing the family to move forward. For some subjects, unresolved grief was clearly an obstacle in their family life.

There's definitely something in the house, something not cohesive in the house. It sort of always felt like we were waiting for somebody. I don't feel like my family was a unit . . . we were sort of splintered after that [after my sister's death]. (Natalie)

The Quest to Assimilate the Loss and Related Themes

Meaning Making and Spiritual Questioning

As subjects spoke of their deceased sibling, many verbalized their quest to understand the loss and to seek meaning.

I often question why we have pain in our lives like this. Because it makes you stronger, or it makes you appreciate the things you have? But I can't buy that. (Andrew)

There were some commonalities in the beliefs of various subjects. Many participants stated that their sibling is an angel who can be counted on to help and protect them.

I have this brother, an older brother, in heaven looking out for me. So every time I don't pay attention and almost get hit by a bus, I never do, and maybe that has something to do with it. (Karen)

Thoughts about possibly being the reincarnation of their deceased sibling were also discussed.

My family thinks that I am that baby, who has come back. I think so too. They said he looks exactly like me. It makes me feel better that the baby is back. (Edwin)

For a while when I was a teenager I was preoccupied with the thought that maybe I was my brother. Because I started to learn about reincarnation. And I thought to myself, I wasn't born when he died, so what if his soul is mine? But that went away, because I came to realize that I'm my own person, and even if I was him, I'm still my own person. (Andrew)

As subsequent siblings strive to make sense of the death of their brother or sister, a common question often arises; they wonder if they would have been born at all if not for the death of their sibling.

You know, there is some question. Had she lived, I might not ever have been born. (Jane)

Survivor Guilt

The frequent musings of subjects upon a possible connection between their birth and their sibling's death points to underlying survivor guilt. Many of their words and stories were fraught with it.

As I get older, I really start to appreciate the things I do have. . . . I have my life, and that's more than most people can say. . . . I should be so appreciative. (Andrew)

One subject, Natalie, felt implicated from the womb in her sister's death. At the time of Natalie's sister's drowning, their mother was pregnant with Natalie, and she was napping when her sister wandered off to the pool. Natalie described her sense of guilt when she realized that the pregnancy caused the nap.

My mother was asleep . . . she said she took lots of naps all the time because she was pregnant. Then it clicked in my head . . . that she was taking a nap and that she was pregnant [with me]. I felt pretty, pretty bad for about two years. (Natalie)

Morbid Preoccupations

Subsequent children have demonstrated a tendency to be preoccupied with death. One can deduce that this may connect to an underlying need to master the loss of their sibling, and, for some, to the ongoing death shadow in their family lives.

There was lots of talk of death in the family. I continue to be fascinated by death, to think of it a lot. I believe that death is like a person who visits us often and lives amongst us. I play games with death. My living brother is like this also. We both think of death; we have been preoccupied with it our whole lives. (Paulina)

Everything I write about is about death. I have this weird connection with stuff like that . . . because honestly, in acting and in anything that I have chosen to write, it has been about loss . . . it's very familiar. . . . I am definitely

a person that can channel on things that are really emotional and really sad, and I think it's because of her [my sister]. (Denise)

Carrying Forward

As part of their meaning making, many subjects described a need to carry the torch for their lost sibling, honoring their memory, living up to their promise, and carrying them forward.

I think of the death of the baby. Sometimes I think that it helps me work hard. (Edwin)

Seeing a picture of someone so beautiful and elegant as my sister, it created something to look forward to and to live up to. Her beauty and gentleness were an inspiration. (Lana)

For ten years I tutored kids. I saw my brother in the little boys. (Sally)

Grieving the Unknown Sibling

Grief about their lost sibling was commonly expressed by subjects. Some remembered times of mourning in their childhood.

There was a time when I was little when I was using her as an imaginary friend. . . . I assumed that she would be coming back in time to go to school. . . . I had this whole thing [planned in my head], that we were going to wear matching outfits . . . and then when I found out she wasn't [coming back] I was a little bummed out. (Natalie)

The words of many subjects point to an ongoing sense of loss or unresolved grief.

I once had a dream. There was this image of these two Siamese twins, these girls, and it's like they had two heads. I can't tell if they had two bodies or one body, but they were merged, and after I woke I wondered, do I feel like a part of myself is missing because I lost a sister? It [my sister's death] definitely made me feel sad. It still does. (Jane)

Sometimes I don't like to write, because when I am writing I am bawling. That's why I don't like to write! I'm just at the computer, crying. (Denise, who is drawn to writing about loss)

Several subjects reported that their experience of loss was not considered or recognized, illustrating an experience of disenfranchised grief.

When I asked my Mom questions about [my sibling's death] my brother told me, that [predates you]. So you aren't affected by it, and you should not ask. (Angelo)

A Search for Clarity

Due to the disenfranchised nature of their loss, many subjects described a lack of clarity about their sibling's death, and wondered how to give it its proper place and due. Several subjects described the conflict which they feel when asked how many siblings they have. Some wonder if it is disloyal to omit their deceased sibling in their response, but fear intrusive questions or discomfort if they disclose the truth. This dilemma illustrates their quandary of how best to include their sibling as they define themselves and their families, both to themselves and to others. Obviously, subjects had divergent feelings about how present or absent their sibling is in their life story, and they came up with various solutions about how to respond to the question.

I remember saying that I used to have another brother. [Two brothers.] Now I say that I have one brother. I am not sure when I made that shift. (Dana)

When people ask me [how many siblings I have] I still talk about the baby. . . . I always include him. But some people don't like it, like my uncle will tell me that I shouldn't do that, that somebody dead is dead. But that's not exactly true. (Edwin)

In many families, secrecy surrounded the death, and subjects were reluctant to discuss it or ask questions as they feared that they would upset their parents.

I just got the understanding that [asking about my deceased sibling] was not a comfortable thing. You would just see little things in my Mom's face . . . bringing back pain for her. There were times I probably did wonder things, but it wasn't as important as not upsetting her. (Martin)

I figured it out [that I had a sister who died] when I was 5 or 6. This person was never spoken about. My parents were so traumatized that they didn't want to talk about it. There were no pictures of my sister in the house. Later, one picture was found. . . . Mom would just say that the picture was of a little girl. After Mom died, me and my brother and sisters had the picture restored, and we all have it in our houses now. (Alan)

Alan's story is a clear example of the secrecy and pain which sometimes surround the death of a child in a family. The restoration of his deceased sister's picture is evidence of his need, shared by his siblings, to incorporate her into his life, when he finally felt allowed to do so (after his Mother's death).

Lack of clarity about their sibling was well illustrated in the fact that 16 of the 25 subjects expressed uncertainty about the location of their sibling's final resting place. In some families, the grave was lost, and for others there was confusion about its location. Several subjects confided that they went on a quest to find their sibling's grave, indicative of a need for knowledge and connection. One subject stated that finding the grave was deeply meaningful, allowing her to mourn. Others expressed a strong desire to find their sibling's grave in the future.

Fantasies About a Lost Sibling

When discussing their fantasies about their deceased sibling, most subjects spoke in positive terms, with tendencies towards idealization. Many imagined that their sibling would have been an ally or a companion. Like some bereaved parents who idealize a deceased child, some subsequent siblings seem to believe that their lost brother or sister would have filled a void for them.

He would be older, could be helpful, give advice, be more established. He'd be a helpful person I could go to. (Dana)

If she were around she would have defended me from my brothers. (Brigit)

Only one subject revealed a more uncertain and ambiguous view about what her sibling might have been like. Perhaps she was the only one who was able to acknowledge, through her ambivalent words, some underlying sibling rivalry and rage, prevalent and often unspoken feelings for many subsequent siblings.

My sister would have been a playmate when I was a child, and a sister is a companion when you are an adult. But then again, you tend to idealize what you don't have. I might have hated her. Maybe she would have done drugs and overdosed. I don't know if we would have been close, or fought like cats and dogs. Who knows. (Candace)

DISCUSSION

The stories of this study's participants illustrate various potential repercussions of the subsequent sibling role, and a range of replacement dynamics. They highlight the fact that the birth status of subsequent children is an important contextual factor which may greatly influence identity formation and social reality. My findings both echo and expand upon a variety of common themes, roles, and dynamics which have been attributed to subsequent children in the clinical literature. To my knowledge, this study represents the largest sample of subsequent siblings interviewed to date; the similarities found between the subjects and the prior smaller samples augments our understanding of this group. The themes of replacement child dynamics, of survivor guilt, of altered parenting and impaired parental bonding, of morbid preoccupations, and of the impact of family grief were all noted previously as well as in this sample. Prior findings of parental over-protectiveness, of disenfranchised or unresolved grief, and of fantasies about the deceased sibling were also echoed in this study.

This study additionally contributes new data to our discoveries about subsequent children. The grieving person's quest for meaning and clarity has been well documented in the clinical literature pertaining to bereaved groups, but before this study it had not been recorded as a common theme for subsequent children. Caregiving is an attribute which has been repeatedly documented in the case studies of subsequent children, but I believe that this article is the first to generalize

it as a frequent trait for subsequent siblings. My findings about replacement dynamics provide some new information which supports, contrasts with, and adds to the prior research. The results of the present study therefore carry implications for practice and for future research.

Some authors have made clear distinctions between replacement children and subsequent children, stating that not all subsequent children are replacement children, as not all subsequent children are born to parents with unresolved grief. (Johnson, 1989). However, I believe that the line between the two camps is not easily defined. My hypothesis is that a spectrum exists, and that subsequent children have an array of experiences, ranging anywhere from acute to minimal replacement dynamics. The stories of my subjects highlight the significance of their sibling's death in their own life stories, and point to a likelihood that all subsequent children will experience some effect from being cast as a subsequent child. The potential to see themselves (or to be seen) as a substitute is inherent to the role. They are at risk of feeling guilt about the death of their predecessor (Legg & Sherick, 1976). In the words of Anisfeld and Richards, (2000, p. 316), "Whether or not one is literally a replacement child, there will always be what Selma Fraiberg and her colleagues (1975) call "ghosts in the nursery" whenever there is a personal or collective history of suffering." While each family's enactment of replacement dynamics will vary widely in scope and intensity, I believe that the unavoidable "ghosts in the nursery" lend themselves to some intrinsic identification, ranging from mild to severe, of the subsequent sibling as a replacement.

In support of this hypothesis, replacement dynamics, which varied from minimal to pronounced, were noted for all of the subjects in the present study. Replacement dynamics were understood and chronicled with the following varied criteria. On the more pronounced end of the spectrum, subjects reported repeated negative comparisons to their deceased sibling, and a sense of living in their shadow. Others described expectations that they would fill the void for their deceased sibling as a "gift child." Additional criteria included other assorted factors which pointed to the subject's identification as a replacement. Some subjects questioned whether they would have been born at all if not for their sibling's death, indicating possible survivor guilt or wondering about a replacement status. Certain subjects verbally identified themselves as replacements. Some described the idealization of their deceased sibling, by their parents or by themselves; this was included as a defining criteria for replacement dynamics, as their awareness of the idealized status of their deceased sibling coupled with the inherent nature of sibling rivalry lends itself to feelings of competition and to fears of being an inadequate substitute. In some families, symbolic acts spoke of replacement; one subject was given his deceased brother's name as a middle name. In the case of two subjects I chose to include evidence which was still unconscious but which spoke loudly of replacement dynamics. One female subject, who was born after the death of her brother, was a self described "Tomboy," but she did not

appear to make any connection between her identity as a Tomboy and her brother's death. The other subject chose to depict only her parents and her deceased sister in her family drawing (in which she was asked to draw "a family doing something"). Her omission of herself points to the amount of psychic space taken by her deceased sibling, and to her own sense of invisibility, which is a common trait for subsequent children (O'Leary et al., 2006). A range of replacement dynamics was evident in the sample, as some subjects were discernibly more impacted than others.

My findings additionally point to fluidity in replacement dynamics, rather than assigned, fixed roles (such as concluding once and for all that a person is or is not a replacement child). I believe that a person's position on the spectrum of replacement dynamic can be changeable both over time and within different family relationships. For example, one parent may view their subsequent child as an inadequate replacement, while the other parent does not. Several study participants revealed that their experiences differed with each parent. The present study's data also demonstrates that one's standing on the spectrum may change with time. For example, Natalie acknowledged that the replacement dynamics with her Mother lessened after she surpassed her deceased sister's age, even though they did not vanish. Grout and Romanoff, who interviewed parents with subsequent children, agreed that family patterns can fluctuate, stating "Patterns may be far more fluid than the design of the study allows us to see. For example, parents' representations may have changed over time and may continue to change" (2000, p. 110). Clearly, the experience of the subsequent child and of their bereaved parents is not stagnant, and it will evolve with the passage of time and of life stages.

The fluidity of the spectrum contributes to some of the identified traits of subsequent children. A fear of a negative shift in their status could foster anxiety and promote behavior which aims to please, such as caretaker roles. The desire for an improved status, or the fear of loss in standing on the spectrum, could be an ongoing influence. This leads to the interesting question of how replacement dynamics are being perpetuated in a family system, a query which has been raised by other researchers. Leon, in one of his subsequent child case studies, states "It was unclear whether family pressure was exerted upon Steve to serve as a replacement child for his dead brother, or whether his identification with his dead brother was internally motivated to win approval from a depressed mother" (Leon, 1986, p. 206). We can surmise that subsequent children may understandably become active participants in replacement dynamics for various reasons, such as a desire for love or approval from their parents, and that an understanding of the whole family system is vital, as the entire system contributes to shifts on the replacement dynamics continuum.

The model of a fluid replacement dynamic continuum may allow us to capture and understand a bit more of the complexity of replacement dynamics. Clinicians need to be vigilant to identify and understand replacement dynamics, as they can be overlooked. To add to the intricacy of this picture, many researchers feel that replacement child dynamics may often be unreported, and may be more

widespread than one might realize; a wish to replace may be acknowledged or hidden, by repression, denial, or secrecy. A “hidden replacement syndrome” can easily go unrecognized (Etchegoyen, 1997). The need to replace a child and to fill the void may be unconscious or suppressed by the family. It is thus unspoken, becoming an unconscious emotional encumbrance for the subsequent child which is not recognized or understood by the family (Gibbons, 1992). Many types of replacements exist. Rosen (1982) concluded that parents may attempt to conceive a replacement child after a living child is diagnosed with a handicap, and Etchegoyen (1997) points out that parents who give a child up for adoption may also be susceptible to seeking a replacement. In some families, a surviving child might be chosen as a replacement child, and encouraged to play the role and develop the traits of their deceased sibling (Gibbons, 1992). “It seems clear that clinical axioms like “replacement child” do not do justice to the complexity of parental representations of the child and the family constellation” (Grout & Romanoff, 2000, p. 111). The definition of replacement children clearly needs to be broadened in its scope and understanding.

Nearly all of the prior clinical literature explores replacement dynamics which are solely characterized by the idealization of the deceased child. However, some researchers (Grout & Romanoff, 2000; Powell, 1995) noted that certain parents idealize the subsequent child instead, and my findings support and build upon their data with some new information. I believe that this study is the first to give voice to the “gift children” and to explore the subsequent child’s perception and experience of that type of replacement dynamic. Grout and Romanoff’s study (2000) sheds light on possible precipitating factors; they found that parents who experienced the death of their child as the loss of a possibility rather than the loss of an individual were more apt to view the subsequent child as an adequate, fulfilling “gift” replacement. We can conclude that it is therefore more likely for subsequent siblings to become “gift children” if their deceased sibling were an infant, with less of a formed identity. The literature documents that subsequent children born after the death of an infant are less prone to comparisons than those who were born after the death of an older child who had a more formed personality (Grout & Romanoff, 2000). Fittingly, almost all of my study’s subjects who were deemed to be “gift children” lost siblings who were under 1 year of age. (Obviously not all parents who lose an infant experience their subsequent child as a “gift child,” but it seems that the young, infancy age of the deceased child is a likely factor for a “gift child” outcome.) I chose to identify this group as “gift children” as I felt that the group needed to be clearly identified as a unique subset on the replacement child spectrum. More awareness and research about this group is definitely warranted.

Implications for Practice and Research

As clinicians assess their cases for replacement dynamics, they should consider the array of factors which can place a family at risk for pronounced replacement

dynamics; these factors are supported by my findings. The amount of time which has elapsed between the sibling's death and the subsequent child's birth is clearly important, as many researchers feel that waiting too short of a time puts the subsequent child in more danger of becoming an inadequate replacement child (Legg & Sherick, 1976). Cain and Cain (1964) point out that even when the subsequent child is a different gender than their predecessor, they are still at risk of replacement dynamics. For example, fathers who do not have a son may try to shape their daughters into one (Lieberman, 1979). Various determinants can lend themselves to more severe replacement dynamics, including a parental history of heavy losses, parental premorbid tendencies, familial unresolved grief, the excessive idealization of the deceased child, the death of an older child, and the suddenness of the child's death (Cain & Cain, 1964). The family's cultural and religious beliefs will shape and impact replacement dynamics as well.

A sensitive and vigilant approach to both prevention and intervention is needed from clinicians. When working with bereaved parents who are choosing to have another child, clinicians can provide support and education about replacement dynamics. It is important to note that the findings of some researchers indicate that having a subsequent child can be truly helpful to a family after a loss, and that this may be a normal need (Johnson, 1984). Some doctors and mental health professionals have counseled bereaved parents to observe a significant waiting period before attempting a subsequent pregnancy, to lower the risks of replacement child syndrome (Cain & Cain, 1964). Gibbons (1992) suggests that practitioners should encourage a grieving family to speak and remember the deceased realistically, avoiding idealization and its negative repercussions by mentioning both the qualities and the flaws of the deceased. The advice for grieving parents varies; some current recommendations might inadvertently encourage replacement dynamics. Wheeler's article (2000) encourages parents who have lost a baby and are having a subsequent child to use symbolic remembrances to help them move on. Several productive possibilities are shared, but one of the suggestions is to have a birth announcement for the subsequent child which recognizes the loss of the deceased child while also welcoming the new baby. One wonders how the subsequent child would feel later in life to see that even her birth announcement was shared and overshadowed with the death of her sibling. Clearly we must be mindful and inclusive of the needs of all family members.

Clinicians should additionally be watchful for transgenerational transmissions of loss, both between the bereaved parents and the subsequent child as well as with future generations of the family. In some cases, subsequent children continue the cycle and dynamics of replacement, attempting to replace their deceased sibling by having a baby. One of Leon's cases (1986) illustrates this dynamic: an adult subsequent sibling with two sons wishes for a daughter, claiming that her deceased sister was special and that having a daughter would make her feel special as well. One can speculate that this was her ongoing attempt to master her familial replacement dynamics, and that her wish for a daughter was an attempt to finally

furnish the lost object whom she felt inadequate to replace. Research about subsequent children as parents would be a vital and rich addition to our knowledge about this population, and it is much needed.

I am hopeful that the model of a fluid spectrum of replacement dynamics might assist clinicians in gaining a fuller understanding of a subsequent child's multi-layered experience. Clinicians are at risk of reinforcing the disenfranchised status of subsequent children if they fail to explore the potential significance and impact of the subsequent role. Identifying histories of loss in the lives of our patients is crucial, as replacement dynamics can be easily undetected or overlooked. Genograms are one possible tool which can enable us to assess and understand the losses of an individual and of a family. Ultimately, clinicians need to assess the whole family system in order to gauge and understand the significance of replacement dynamics faced by their clients. As subsequent children are a disenfranchised group, education about their collective experiences and the normalization of their experiences is also warranted. Many subjects of this study wondered aloud if their experiences were "normal," asked with interest about the other subjects, and stated that they had rarely or never been given the opportunity to explore or tell their stories as subsequent children. Their stories must be told, validated, and heard.

Validity and Limitations

There are clearly a host of factors which impacted the experiences of the subjects of this study but which were beyond the scope of this article to discuss. Cultural and religious viewpoints on death, grief, and coping with loss differed greatly amongst the participants, and often held deep significance. Family composition also contributed to each subject's role as a subsequent child; an array of sibling and parental configurations were represented in the sample, which helped to shape family roles and dynamics. The large and diverse sample size should however help offset any biases.

Additional limitations include the fact that this is a self selected sample. All of the subjects became participants after responding to an advertisement for the study. One can speculate that those who chose to participate might have done so because of an underlying need to master their experiences as subsequent children, and that they therefore may be more identified and impacted as replacement children than the overall population of subsequent children. On the other hand, one can wonder if some who were greatly impacted might have avoided participating as well. One woman who called for information decided that the topic was too difficult to discuss; she declined to participate in an emotional tone. The qualitative research design of the study is an additional factor which does not allow us to determine how the characteristics which were discovered in this sample are distributed in the general population of subsequent children. A survey to follow up upon this study's discovered themes would be necessary to make such

a determination; however, such a survey would be difficult to implement, which adds to the value of this study's findings.

Finally, the fact that this study was implemented by one sole author is a limitation as well, due to the risk for bias. However, that is offset by the fact that I was able to explore deeply and understand the experiences of the participants. Sole authorship is commonplace in anthropological research, and the depth of the study can really only be achieved by someone who immerses herself in the world of her subjects.

CONCLUSION

Much of the literature about subsequent children supports my findings about common traits and patterns of this population. As some of those findings are primarily documented in single case studies or very small samples, I am hopeful that this study, with its larger number of participants, will help solidify our knowledge of some of the predominant themes, issues, and concerns of subsequent children, as well as adding some new data to our knowledge base. It seems that subsequent children are predisposed to experience survivor guilt, grief for their lost sibling, and disenfranchised grief. They are prone to becoming caregivers, professionally and in their family roles. Many of them, like other bereaved groups, seek meaning and understanding of the loss, and they have a need for clarity and information about their deceased sibling. Their families have been transformed by their sibling's death, and they have experienced a parenting style which has been altered by the loss. Many of them harbor fantasies of their deceased sibling, and a desire to carry their sibling forward in some way. Some form of replacement dynamics, from minimal to severe, seems to be present for all subsequent children, and replacement roles vary, comprising children who are viewed as "gift children" as well as those who are seen as inadequate replacements. The identity formation of subsequent siblings may be impacted considerably by their role as a replacement or as a subsequent child, with potentially adverse consequences.

As practitioners, our tasks are to be alert to signs and risks of replacement child dynamics and to be aware of the vulnerabilities of subsequent children and their families, so that we can intervene appropriately and effectively. Our goals can be both preventative and reparative as we work with bereaved parents who are expecting a child, subsequent children, and grieving families. Due to the commonly disenfranchised or overlooked status of the loss of subsequent children, it is vital for us to uncover the histories of loss of our clients, to identify transgenerational transmissions of loss and trauma and replacement dynamics which may be unprocessed or hidden. Our recognition and understanding of the varied and potentially powerful ramifications of replacement dynamics, of unresolved grief in one's family of origin, and of the subsequent sibling role will assist us in bringing the significance and impact of these losses to light while fostering healing and the relinquishment of traumatic familial patterns of grief.

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