

ATTITUDES OF VOCATIONAL HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS
TOWARD DEATH WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR
INSERVICE EDUCATION

By

KENNETH L. CURL

Bachelor of Science
Central State University
Edmond, Oklahoma
1969

Master of Science
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1978

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Thesis Approved:

Elaine Jorgensen

Thesis Adviser

Ledya L. Eppes

Althea Wright

John J. Gardner

Norman N. Murham

Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Until recent years, most Americans have avoided talking about death and dying. When death struck close and claimed a family member or friend, there was generally an avoidance of the plain word "died" (Ogg, 1976). Death is a profound event not only for the individual but also for society (Fulton, 1976). In America, death occurs about five thousand times every day and about two million times each year (National Funeral Directors Association, 1977). Yet, most Americans do not readily cope with death because they rarely see anyone die (Berg and Daugherty, 1972).

Statement of the Problem

It is no accident that death has emerged as a problem in America precisely when, for the first time in history, half the population can confidently expect to enjoy a full Biblical life span of threescore years and ten. This longevity, coupled with increased family mobility, has drastically dimmed our perception of death.

Even though death is a biologically determined consequence of life, it is a special problem today because it is not seen as the rational conclusion of life. The contemporary pattern of scientific rationality includes efforts to eliminate death. Parsons (1963) observes that:

The attitude conspicuous in the United States is one of bringing to bear every possible resource to prolong active and

healthy life. It would seem then, that a clue to the development of some aspects of our attitudes toward death might be found in the whole complex of health and the tendency to prolong life in good health (p. 61).

Parents are almost as inhibited in talking with children about death as they have been with talking about birth (Gommert, 1980). Additionally, parents tend to experience a good deal of frustration and helplessness when faced with questions about death from their children (Kavanaugh, 1972). They feel that it is unwise to appear confused, uncertain, or frightened in front of their children. The anxiety and repression of death on the part of adults has resulted in misconceptions about death on the part of young people, making the need to include units of instruction on death education in the curriculum readily apparent. Kavanaugh (1972, p. 128) notes that if death education of children is neglected, parents allow them the "time and opportunity to sift their own data, to learn puzzling and fearful interpretations elsewhere, while concocting weird fantasies that may affect their lifelong attitudes toward mortality."

Since parents have been reluctant to discuss dying and death with their children, the school has been given the responsibility of teaching about death in order to equip the student with the skills needed for coping with death. In the past, any teaching of skills and attitudes about death has been primarily left to the individual teacher. However, formal instruction in death education is needed in the school since it is so relevant to the real-life needs of most students. Thompson (1983) indicates that Oklahoma vocational home economics teachers have been confronted time and again in dealing with students who have experienced the loss of a classmate. Thompson (1983, n.p.) states that "We must now

teach the awareness of death because the awareness was not learned through experience."

The home economics classroom traditionally is student-centered and provides individualized learning experiences for the students (Beckman, 1978). These home economics program characteristics are quite suitable for the teaching of death education. However, the attitudes of classroom teachers toward death should be of prime concern. Taddeo (1977, p. 7) states that "Research in the relationship between teacher attitudes and student performance attests to the pervading assumption that teacher attitudes have a definite impact on a student's learning and development." According to Yap (1977) the evidence is ample that teacher attitudes significantly influence students' behavior and interaction in the classroom. Thus, the attitude of the teacher affects the learning process between student and teacher. Also, teacher attitudes are reflective in peer attitude and acceptance when dealing with the subject matter of death since as a topic of discussion and study it has been avoided and evaded in our society. Without the support and attitudinal acceptance of regular classroom teachers toward death education, students do not have the opportunity to examine their thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and fears about death.

Formal instruction provides opportunities for examining one's feelings, perceptions, and attitudes toward the various parameters of death. Several studies have shown that attitudes can be and are altered through formal instruction (Cruse, 1981). Attitudinal change hopefully means being better able to discuss death and its many dimensions, and to perceive the ending of life as a meaningful component of living.

Identification of teacher attitudes toward death can enable educational personnel responsible for curriculum development to more successfully implement death education units of instruction. "One of the major justifications for studying attitudes toward any topic or subject matter is to begin to bring about changes in attitudes" (Harth, 1973, p. 159). Consequently, there is a need to identify the attitudes of vocational home economics teachers toward death.

Purpose and Objectives

Because of the need for death education in the school, the writer is interested in providing the best possible opportunities for students through the home economics curriculum. Since consumer and homemaking teachers have not been systematically surveyed concerning their attitudes toward death or the resources available to teach death education, the writer has become increasingly interested in the subject. The purpose then of this study is to gather information regarding attitudes toward death as perceived by the vocational home economics teachers of the state of Oklahoma.

The following objectives were developed to give more specific direction to the study.

1. Identify the attitudes on the part of Oklahoma vocational home economics teachers toward death.
2. Determine the number of days these teachers assign to a unit on death education.
3. Identify respondents' preferences of resources for a unit on death education.
4. Determine respondents' interest for training sessions on death education.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated for this study:

1. There will be no significant relationship between the attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale and current opinion of respondents as to whether death education should be taught in the school.
2. There will be no significant relationship between the attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale and indication by respondents as to whether they teach a unit on death education.
3. There will be no significant relationship between the attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale and loss of a significant person within the last two years by respondents.
4. There will be no significant relationship between the attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale and attendance at a funeral within the last two years by these teachers.

Assumptions and Limitations

For the purpose of conducting this study, it was assumed that instruction in death education rests primarily with the consumer and homemaking teachers in the various school systems across the state of Oklahoma. The fact that respondents in this state-wide study were Oklahoma vocational home economics teachers limits the generalizability of the results.

Definition of Terms

These definitions are presented to clarify the terminology used in this study.

Attitude - An opinion or manner of expressing feelings. This definition is consistent with the following interpretations. Good (1973, p. 49) said that it was "the predisposition or tendency to reach specifically towards an object, situation, or value; usually accompanied by feeling and emotions." English and English (1958, p. 50) stated that "an attitude can be identified by a consistency of response to classes or categories of statements. An individual's state of readiness affects feeling and actions related to response."

Unit of Instruction - The material or instruction for a single class period or more of topics within the home economics curriculum (Drummond, 1976).

Vocational Consumer and Homemaking Teacher - Certified secondary teacher who is employed for the purpose of implementing a consumer and homemaking home economics program that meets requirements for reimbursements from Federal vocational funds (Rogers, 1978).

Procedure

The population for this study included all the certified teachers who were teaching in vocational home economics programs in the state of Oklahoma during the 1983-84 school year. The listing of the population was obtained from the Home Economics Division of the State Department of Vocational Education for Oklahoma in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

An established instrument to measure attitudes toward death was used to identify the teacher attitudes. The reliability and validity of the instrument is discussed in Chapter III research design. A questionnaire to identify selected variables was constructed by the researcher. A set of open response questions were developed to give

the researcher insight into possible inservice program needs of the teachers and possible curriculum needs for the teacher preparatory programs.

The instruments were mailed to the teachers. The data were interpreted following the statistical analysis. Recommendations and conclusions were formulated according to the results of the analysis.

Summary

Chapter I has outlined the problem and purpose of this study; and the objectives, hypotheses, assumptions, limitations, and definition of terms which were formulated to guide this study. Chapter II presents the review of literature to gain an understanding of attitudes toward death in our contemporary society. Chapter III includes the methodology used to collect the data, and Chapter IV presents the analysis of the data. Summary, conclusions and recommendations of this study are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Since this study deals with attitudes toward death of Oklahoma consumer and homemaking teachers, the review of literature is organized into three areas. The first section reviews various societal and personal attitudes toward death in the United States both past and present. The second section is a discussion of teacher attitudes as related to the student learning process. The third section is a discussion of curriculum planning to include death education in the school.

Societal Attitudes Toward Death

The attitudes that people maintain toward dying and death, both on the personal level and the societal level, are influenced strongly by the cultural milieu in which they live. Change is the hallmark of people in the twentieth century. Many signs are evident of a thoroughgoing reappraisal of the social patterns, customs, and attitudes inherited from past generations. As individuals and as a society, questions are asked regarding whether social institutions and customs adequately reflect basic needs and aspirations. Underlying this quest for integrity and meaning is a search for essential values that can inform the way people choose to live (DeSpelder and Strickland, 1983).

Of all human experiences, none is more overwhelming in its implications than death. Feifel (1969, p. 11) has stated, "We can postpone, gain reprieves, but ultimately we all must die." Even though death is a universal phenomenon, it also has been a major crisis family members face in their lifetimes. According to Somerville (1976, p. 115) "Two American families are bereaved every minute in peacetime. In war years the rate rises."

Beginning with the psychological impact of potential or actual separation, there are social and psychological forces that affect the bereaved and condition their responses to death. However, death involves not just the bereaved family but also the significant others of the dead and their relatives. "Since mortality tends to disrupt the ongoing life of social groups and relationships, all societies must develop some forms of containing the impact" (Blauner, 1966, p. 384). For many people, the ultimate crisis is loss by death of a loved person; and dying, death, and bereavement present a complex situation common to all men. Moreover, the resolution of grief remains an intricate yet imprecisely understood reaction to dying and death. Yet, for most people, death remains a shadowy figure whose presence is only vaguely acknowledged.

Although American attitudes toward death have undergone change in the last decade, the predominant outlook and social customs regarding death are marked by a queasy uncertainty that some observers characterize as a denial of death (DeSelder and Strickland, 1983). Moreover, in a study conducted by Schneidman (1971) it was found that death was rarely discussed within the immediate family circle. In addition, when death was discussed, it created emotional discomfort and anxiety among

family members. Anxiety about death is not new, of course. Death has always represented the central question of human experience, but one that, for the greater part of the present century, most Americans have tried in various ways to avoid. As Glendon (1970, p. 77) points out, "American culture seems involved in a conspiracy to remove death from conscious awareness."

Life styles influence death styles. Attitudes develop out of the interplay between individuals and their environment. According to Good (1973) an attitude includes components of belief, emotion, and behavior. To better understand present attitudes toward death, it is important to examine past attitudes toward death in American society to include the way people believed, behaved, and felt about death.

In the usual course of events in family life, some measure of discord and disappointment are inevitable, and to some extent should lead to a tolerance of frustration. However, a crisis in the life of the family may exert pervasive and far reaching effects on the individual, the stability of the family, and the pattern of emotional balance and interchange (Neuhaus and Neuhaus, 1974).

Dying causes a family crisis of major proportion in which everyone is effected (Smart and Smart, 1980). Today's cultural denial of death has caused families to view such an event as a major irreversible trauma causing a severe stress. The lack of integration of death into the natural processes of life results in a sociocultural failure to develop attitudes of acceptance toward this natural phenomenon.

However, dying and death were considered a natural part of the total family experience not too many years ago. Death was a frequent occurrence, the natural resolution of the apparent fragility of the

human condition (Gordon and Klass, 1979). Families lived together, often with several generations in the same household. The dying process took place within the family circle, as did the death itself and often the funeral (Habenstein and Lamers, 1962). Each person learned about death firsthand. Family members were able to view the process of dying, death, grief, and bereavement as natural parts of the total cycle. From caring for the dying family member through disposition of the body, death has been within the realm of the family. In comparison to a time when skills for dealing with dying and death were an ordinary part of common domestic life, current participation by family members in the rituals surrounding the dead is minimal.

The changes in how Americans have dealt with dying and death over the past hundred years result from a combination of social and technological factors. The size, shape, and distribution of the American population have undergone major changes since the turn of the century. Increases in average life expectancy, coupled with lower mortality rates, have had a tremendous influence on our attitudes and implicit expectations with regard to life and death. According to DeSpelder and Strickland (1983) average life expectancy in the United States has increased from 47 to 73 years since 1900. Most Americans take for granted the expectation that a newborn child will live on into his or her seventh decade, perhaps beyond.

Fulton (1976, p. 71) indicates that "The denial of death and the deritualization of mourning in America today parallel and reflect other significant changes apparent in family life." For instance, the extended family has been replaced by a smaller family unit, the nuclear family, the effects of which have been accentuated by increased geographical

mobility (Duvall, 1977). Also, a highly mobile life style contributes to making the impact of death less immediate. As Fulton (1976, p. 84) reports, the typical American family "may expect statistically to live 20 years without the passing of one of its members."

Further it has been estimated that most people attend only one or two funerals a decade during the first 50 years of life (Blauner, 1966). Clearly, the average American has little experience with death and its consequences. Thus, part of the taboo of death is likely to be a matter of widespread inexperience and general lack of contact with it.

Changing causes of death represent another major reason why experience with death today is so different from what it was at the turn of the century. Then the typical death was rapid and sudden, often caused by acute infectious diseases such as tuberculosis or pneumonia (DeSpelder and Strickland, 1983). Now the typical death is a slow, progressive process resulting from diseases such as heart disease and cancer (Oklahoma State Medical Examiner, 1982). As a result of these changing causes of death, many people now have the notion of death as something that happens in old age (National Research Council, 1982).

Advances in medical science and in applied health care technologies have altered the setting where dying most often occurs as well. Not only is death less prevalent than it once was, it is less visible, as is dying. The majority of all deaths in the United States now occur in a hospital or nursing home (Somerville, 1976). Dying in the hospital rather than the home is a recent social change. In 1900, two-thirds of the Americans who died did so in their own beds, at home (DeSpelder and Strickland, 1983). Fulton (1974, p. 31) reports that "today, about 80 percent of deaths occur in an institutional setting." In contrast,

families in countries like Greece, Malaya, and Italy have requested or insisted their dying relatives be moved from hospital to home when near the point of death (Glaser and Strauss, 1968). Thus, the situation is quite the reverse of what it was a hundred years ago, when most Americans died at home surrounded by their loved ones.

Death, then, is uncommon in the modern family's experience. As a result, American society has largely been death-denying. Several authors (Grollman, 1974; Cassell, 1974) indicate that one reason bringing about a death-avoiding culture is the fact that death is rarely witnessed by the individual. For example, according to Kastenbaum and Aisenberg (1972), approximately 92 percent of college students in the United States have never seen a dead body. Kubler-Ross (1969) gives some indication as to how this has evolved.

Teen-agers have been so protected from death that they have absolutely no concept of it. We have these silly hospital signs up: No Children Allowed. It's a disgrace. Today everyone who is dying is shipped immediately to a nursing home or hospital. It's like growing up in a greenhouse - you're never exposed to a cold wind, the realities of death. Talking with a dying relative or paying visits to a nursing home with a class is of fantastic benefit. If you start thinking about death when young, especially in high school, you will have far fewer problems later on when faced with death in the family (p. 27).

Cassell (1974) indicates that attitudes of denial have been due in part to the fact that death is institutionalized and generally does not take place in the home. Another factor is increased family mobility in which family members live by themselves often miles apart from other family members. The death of a loved one, when it does take place, seems very distant and far removed from the everyday environment.

Additionally, attitudes of avoidance have been brought about through technological advancements, which contribute to an individual's

longevity. Advanced study and discovery in the areas of pathology and medicine have created the illusion that there will always be a treatment or cure (Cassell, 1974). According to Aries (1974), the whole movement in Western history has been away from understanding death as something that happens to us as individuals to thinking and feeling about death as something that happens to somebody else. Nonetheless, few individuals will likely be able to escape the experience of losing a family member by death during their lifetime. As Kubler-Ross (1969) indicates,

Death is still a fearful, frightening happening, and the fear of death is a universal fear even if we think we have mastered it on many levels. What has changed is our way of coping and dealing with death and dying and our dying patients (p. 4).

Thus, American attitudes toward death have changed greatly during the course of the present century. In place of a common familiarity with the experience of death, most Americans today have little or no direct experience of being with a dying person or of preparing the body of a loved one for burial (Habenstein and Lamers, 1962). Such encounters with death have been displaced from the domestic environment, removed from the immediacy of family and friends. As a result, many people feel uncomfortable when confronted by death or even its mention. Fulton (1976, p. 35) claims that "death, like a noxious disease, has become a taboo subject, and as such it is both the subject of much disguise and denial as well as raucous and macabre humor." Kubler-Ross (1969, p. 105) has written that not only is this "a society in which death is viewed as taboo, but discussion of it is regarded as morbid, and children are excluded with the presumption and pretext that it would be 'too much' for them."

Although direct contact with death is far less common than it once was, death nevertheless occupies a significant place in the larger cultural environment. The prevailing cultural attitude toward death can be seen in the language used to describe the fact of death, as well as in the portrayal of death by the media and in literature (DeSpelder and Strickland, 1983). In fact, Weir (1980, p. 2) indicates "Death is the most enduring and universal theme in all literature." The manner in which death is presented in news reports, dramatic features, and even in various forms of humor can be considered as indicative of current attitudes toward death and dying within American culture.

Attitude Development

An attitude has been defined as a predisposition of the individual to evaluate some symbol or object in his world in a favorable or unfavorable manner (Katz, 1963). Sherif and Sherif (1967) listed several characteristics of the concept of attitude that differentiate it from the other concepts referring to the internal state of the individual:

1. Attitudes are not innate.
2. Attitudes are not temporary states but are more or less enduring once they are formed.
3. Attitudes always imply a relationship between the person and the objects.
4. The relationship between person and object is not neutral but has motivational-affective properties (p. 115).

Shaw and Wright (1967) stated that attitudes possess the following characteristics:

1. Attitudes are based upon evaluation concepts regarding characteristics of the referent object and give rise to motivated behavior.
2. Attitudes are construed as varying in quality and intensity (or strength) on a continuum from positive through neutral to negative.

3. Attitudes are learned, rather than being innate or a result of constitutional development and maturation.
4. Attitudes have specific social referents, or specific classes thereof.
5. Attitudes possess varying degrees of interrelatedness to one another.
6. Attitudes are relatively stable and enduring (pp. 6-9).

Both lists of characteristics agreed that attitudes are learned, are not temporary or neutral, and imply a relationship.

Attitudes help to simplify a complex world. "We form and develop attitudes in order to understand the world around us, to protect our self-esteem, to adjust in a complex world, and to express our fundamental values" (Triandis, 1971, p. 101). Porter (1971, p. 9) explained that the formation of attitudes was a process of transmission which involved ". . . both significant others in the individual's environment and his cognitive and emotional development." Family and the school are important agents of attitude transmission. Attitudes are also influenced by one's culture and social structure (Porter, 1971).

Triandis (1971) outlined the development of the cognitive component of attitude formation as follows:

1. The individual learns the category.
2. The individual learns to associate the categories with other categories.
3. The individual learns to evaluate.
4. Judgments about attitude become more differentiated with age (pp. 112-113).

The teacher attitude plays a role in the student learning process. Yap (1977, p. 38) states, "Evidence is ample that teachers' attitudes toward children significantly influence their behavior and interaction in the classroom." Teacher attitude supplements learning about and acceptance of death as a part of life (Kubler-Ross, 1969). The importance of the teacher's own attitude toward death and her preparation for teaching the subject cannot be overemphasized. Prior to classroom

instruction, the teacher must first confront her own feelings about death. Grollman (1967, p. 21) reports one teacher as stating "Before I can teach children about death, someone has to straighten me out."

Research has indicated that attitudes can be changed. Zajonc (1968) tested the hypothesis often employed by the advertising industry that mere repeated exposure of the individual to a stimulus is a sufficient condition for the enhancement of his attitude toward it. The results of the study were in favor of the hypothesis. Similar results were obtained by Krugman and Hartley (1969, p. 627) who reported that ". . . the development of 'new' likes for specific items is closely correlated with the number of exposures, that the learning involves a gradual but regular process."

The behavioral aspects of attitude, that is the set of actions displayed by an individual, are often subconsciously conveyed to students. "Teachers tell children about their own fears and anxieties from the content which they teach" (Cohen, 1977, p. 14). Cohen (1977) further suggests that this behavior is often unthinking, but the attitude in a proportionate part is communicated to the students.

Sheek (1984) reports that success for the consumer and homemaking educator is equated with his or her own individual comfort level with the subject matter. "Schools should be encouraged to seek out teachers who are comfortable with the content of the curriculum and who have established rapport with their students" (Sheek, 1984, p. 37). Thus in order to be comfortable with content and students the teacher must have a clear fix on his or her feelings about topics in the curriculum such as death education and a clear understanding of his or her relationship with the students.

Unless teachers have dealt with their own feelings about death and dying, they might operate out of misconceptions and attitudes which could jeopardize honest and open communications. If educators have an awareness of their own feelings they will more likely have the sensitivity needed to allow students to deal with their own selfhood and relationships in product ways (Sheek, 1984). "The teacher has a profound influence on each student's behavior and achievement, but in addition, the teacher also has a tremendous influence on how students perceive life" (Gearheart and Weishahn, 1976, p. 189). Taddeo (1977) agrees that teacher attitudes affect the student's learning and development. Subsequently, this is important if students are to develop a realistic and objective point of view toward death as a universal phenomenon. Teaching about death and dying, then, begins with the educator, for the first thing we bring to our students is ourselves.

Curriculum Planning and Death Education

Unruh (1975) has identified curriculum planning as,

. . . a complex process of assessing needs, identifying desired learning outcomes, planning and preparing for instruction to achieve the outcomes, and using the cultural, social, and personal needs and interests that the curriculum is to serve (p. 79).

Brown (1961) indicates that with the broad objectives of education being self-realization, civic responsibility, economic efficiency, and the ability to sustain cooperative human relationships, curriculum planning should be based upon the application of balanced approaches to the valid needs of children and youth and should recognize (1) scientific principles of learning, (2) the need for realistic facing up to societal needs, and (3) the elements of cooperation inherent in our concepts of the ideals of democracy.

This pattern for curriculum planning is based upon one's philosophy of life, philosophy of home economics, and philosophy of home economics education. These philosophies are used as the basis for the analysis of socio-economic conditions and needs of society and of families within the society, needs of students, the local situation, the content and organization of the subject situation, the content and organization of the subject fields, and developments in education. Simpson (1965) states that decisions in curriculum development will largely be a function of beliefs and values in the area mentioned. Since curriculum consists of the means of instruction used by the school to provide opportunities for student learning experiences leading to desired learning outcomes, it is the responsibility of all concerned to meet the demands of an everchanging world (Krug, 1957).

Tyler (1950) gives four fundamental questions to be answered in developing a curriculum. They are as follows:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to obtain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can it be determined whether these purposes are being attained? (p. 2).

When planning the curriculum it is necessary to have some idea of the objectives and outcomes to be reached. Hall and Pacolucci (1961) give three basic and consecutive steps for teaching to include:

1. determining and stating objectives encompassing home economics content and a specific behavior change desired in learner;
2. providing the kinds of experiences that make possible the attainment of these objectives; and
3. seeking pertinent and reliable evidence for deciding whether these objectives have been achieved (p. 141).

Hall and Pacolucci (1961) believe the definitive set of objectives will tell what one should teach and how it should be taught, and will help one determine what one has taught.

As the curriculum is planned to reach a given objective, it is necessary to arrange educational experiences through which learning will take place and the educational objectives will be achieved (Tyler, 1950). Taba and Noel (1957) encourage local teachers in the increasing responsibility of curriculum organization and stress the necessity to determine essential universal learnings with subject content varied to achieve them. Home economics programs are organized to facilitate the achievement of the broad purposes of home economics. Spafford and Amidon (1960) have identified the purposes of a home economics program at the secondary level as guiding those it teaches to,

- . . . establish values which will give greatest meaning to their personal, family, and community living.
- . . . create a home and community environment conducive to the healthy growth and development of all members of the family.
- . . . achieve wholesome and satisfying interpersonal relationships within the school, home and community.
- . . . use their resources to provide the means for satisfying needs, developing interests and using capacities to attain the values and goals considered most worthwhile for the individual, the family and the community (p. 23).

Richardson (1977) maintains that

a home economics teacher can be an effective force for change if s/he plans carefully and involves other people. The results will be an educational environment which provides the opportunity for students to develop their potential more fully (p. 164).

Home economics teachers have long been encouraged to know their community, the background of their students, and to use this knowledge in their curriculum planning (Hatcher and Halchin, 1973). Further, Hurt (1967, p. 24) indicates that "Home Economics curriculums should remain

flexible and open to change in order to be relevant to the students they serve." English and Kaufman (1975) support this contention in stating:

Curriculum is a valued process for bringing about required and desired changes in learner skills, knowledge, and attitudes so that students can survive and contribute to the world of future schooling and the world of work, family, and interpersonal relationships (p. 53).

Such progressive views purport that classroom content and instruction must provide relevancy for students in order to meet their needs and interests. In order to achieve this kind of relevance for instruction in death education, consumer and homemaking teachers must familiarize themselves with the thought patterns of students which include their attitudes, values, beliefs, and interests.

Schools are increasingly concerned about social consciousness. Subjects like sex education, environmental education, and consumer education have evolved in curriculums from coast to coast (Grollman, 1974). The quest for relevance virtually dictates that discussion of death, the most universal of all natural phenomena, be considered. This is especially important since the literature dealing with the child's general perception of death indicates that there is an inadequacy of knowledge in this area.

In addition to the accepted fact that knowledge about and preparation for a critical or traumatic event lessens the psychological effects and helps in the recovery process, teaching about death in the classroom has yet another justification. Young people today are placed in a contradictory and seemingly untenable situation. On the one hand, they are faced daily with life-and-death concerns. War, abortion and euthanasia, growing teenage suicide rates, the entire ecological

question, violence in the media, and the mounting drug problem are all real problems facing young people today. On the other hand, adults deny them the opportunity to develop a realistic frame of reference through which to draw conclusions and formulate solutions.

Education via schools and universities is being challenged to become one of the chief avenues for helping the individual to understand himself and others and to develop a sense of identity and worth (Moravek, 1970). To neglect the emotional needs of a student creates anxieties. Anxieties begin very early in the individual's relationship with his mother or other significant persons and may carry over into many areas of adult life (Sullivan, 1953). Since death is one of the characteristic anxieties of human existence, the people of any society must find the means to deal with this recurring crisis (Pearson, 1969). Presumably, one way to deal with it is to study about it. Kubler-Ross (1969) indicates that studying death reduces the fear of it, and so increases the joy of life. It is an integral part of the teacher's role as a professional educator to welcome opportunities to dispel needless fears and misconceptions that arise from lack of knowledge and understanding.

Death education is the ongoing process of exploring factors pertaining to death and dying and their relationship to the living.

Kurlycheck (1977) defines it as a

. . . process concerned with increasing an individual's awareness of the part that death plays in that person's life and with providing structures to assist the student in examining these realities and integrating them into his or her life (p. 44).

Ideally, death education should begin in childhood and continue through maturity to senescence, because the meaning of death undergoes constant

reevaluation and modification over a lifetime. The intent, then, of death education is not to become preoccupied with death but rather to foster a greater sensitivity to life.

Death education is a preparation for living, and dying is one of the few experiences we all will have in common. There is a time when every adult and most young people are faced with the death of a close friend or relative. The teacher is in the classroom when death affects one of her students. She cannot avoid the issue. All she can avoid by detaching herself is being there for her students when they are confused and in need of help. In order to deal with the practical matters, their emotions, the need to continue living, facing their own eventual death, and providing support for those they love, an understanding and acceptance of the death and dying process has become necessary. This is particularly important since many parents do not teach their children how to mourn or grieve. This awareness could also develop a greater appreciation of the value of life and living.

However, Americans in contemporary society have an ambivalent attitude about death (Rucker, Thompson, and Dickerson, 1977). Death as a topic of discussion and study has been avoided and evaded in our society. Because of the anxiety about death that adults harbor, they have a strong tendency to shield a child from death and dying. An investigation by Hendin (1973) showed that children frequently talked about death, and interestingly the comments often came at bedtime! Still, adults tend to avoid the subject. Hendin (1973, p. 142) has stated "to shield a child from knowing is to shield him from learning, and children must learn."

Kastenbaum (1969) has suggested that anxiety about death and dying is usually high among adolescents. In fact, the death of a loved one could have traumatic consequences for adolescents. Teenagers often suffer severe anxiety about death when it occurs at a time when they are searching for their own personal identity (Bascue and Krieger, 1974). The young person is trying to discover the meaning of his own life. He is undergoing rapid and significant physical and emotional changes and can have tendencies toward irrational behavior. Jackson (1971) indicated that all of these characteristics of this period will have strong bearing on the adolescent's thoughts and feelings about death. How he will express his feelings may be closely related to the preparation he has had about the subject in the past (Jackson, 1971).

Adolescents mix their own emotional problems with crisis resulting in the family (Jackson, 1965). The loss of a parent through death is an experience that has touched and will continue to touch the lives of thousands of children in this country (Berlinsky and Biller, 1982). In 1978, 3.5 percent of the under eighteen-year-old population had, at some point during childhood, lost a father through death. In the same year, 1.4 percent of the child population had been affected by the death of a mother (U. S. Social Security Administration, 1979). Generally, one young person out of every twenty will lose a parent during childhood (Kalish, 1981). The death of a parent is one of the most severe crises a young person can experience (Grollman, 1981).

If education is to prepare young people for life, perhaps it should also prepare them as future parents or teachers to handle their own questions and concerns related to death (Cruse, 1981). This concern for attitudes of adolescents toward death can be negatively demonstrated

by the epidemic of suicidal communication among young people. Brody (1984) states,

Since the 1950's, the suicide rate among young people in the United States has increased by about 300 percent while the rates among other age groups have not changed markedly. Suicide is the second leading cause of death, after accidents, among teenagers (p. 14).

However, death education has been a neglected area in schools, as well as the home. Death is a topic which receives little attention in junior high and senior high textbooks (Sommerville, 1976). Those textbooks which include death and bereavement among personal and family crises are few in number and treat these topics with extraordinary brevity (Edmunds, 1976). Texts used in elementary schools with younger children may contain only one sentence related to death, loss, or crisis (Hoeflin, 1960). Not only are classroom texts lacking substantive information on death and dying, but parents are literally afraid to discuss the topic of death with their children. Sommerville (1976, p. 112) states, "death and sex are the two subjects parents find most difficult to talk about with their children."

The need for formal approaches to death education in the curriculum has been well documented in professional literature. The following statements are exemplary:

So far schools have almost totally ignored the problem of death education, leaving it as a subject to be dealt with by parents and religious institutions. Neglect of the subject is probably due to the inability that exists in American culture to face death and the dilemma of how to deal with death so as to help students without distressing parents. However, if education is supposed to prepare children for life, death education must be included (Clay, 1976, p. 179).

Schools can assist the child in the development of all three components of his set of death beliefs. Cognitive understanding can be increased; affective understanding can be clarified; and the resulting behavior can be understood.

To accomplish this, death education should become part of the school's planned curriculum (Moseley, 1976, p. 37).

The school's responsibility for death education is complementary to that received in the home and church when it does occur. Its role is to disseminate current and valid information, to explore philosophical thought, and to serve students' personal needs through its varied counseling services. The schools can help students take a more informed, objective look at the nature of death and dying and to integrate this understanding into a more productive life. When death education is viewed as an ongoing process throughout the life cycle, the responsibility for it can be shared by the home, church, other community agencies, and the schools.

Since death education is for the living - students, teachers, parents, and others - a well designed unit of instruction can help students come to understand and accept the idea of death in the cycle of life. Goals for death education and units of instruction have been suggested by Grollman (1977); Gordon and Klass (1977); among others. The following six goals are a synthesis of several goal statements. They reflect some of the basic concerns relative to death education:

1. Gently remove the taboo aspect of death language so students can read and discourse upon death rationally without becoming anxious.
2. Promote comfortable and intelligent interaction with the dying as human beings who are living until they are dead.
3. Educate children about death so they grow up with a minimum of death-related anxieties. Anxieties are too often based upon irrationality and myth rather than fact.

4. Understand the dynamics of grief and the reactions of differing age groups to the death of a 'significant other.'
5. Enable students to be informed consumers of funeral services.
6. Recognize the variations involved in aspects of death both within and between cultures. Death means different things to different people.

Teaching about death can be a rewarding and satisfying experience for teacher and student alike. As a subject for exploration within the classroom, it meets the criteria of being intrinsically interesting, intellectually challenging, and personally and socially relevant. It is the belief of the writer that a unit on death education can help improve a student's attitude toward self and his environment. Curriculum planning to include a unit on death education could result in better teaching and better learning experiences, and is the rational way of responding to a changing society.

Summary

The desire to avoid facing death has resulted, in large measure, from lack of understanding of death and society's uncomfortable feelings about the whole topic. Because of the changes which have occurred in American society, individuals have had little first-hand exposure to death and almost no formal education concerning death.

The characteristics of attitudes were analyzed followed by theories on attitude formation. The importance of the teacher's own attitude toward death was emphasized, as well as its relationship to the student learning process.

The concern that death and bereavement as universal family experiences have been largely ignored in the school curriculum, even when other family crises find some inclusion in the classroom, was mentioned.

The role of consumer and homemaking teachers in equipping students with attitudes toward life, which includes an acceptance of death as well as an examination of fears and feelings toward death, was discussed. The review of literature indicated that these teachers have not been systematically surveyed concerning their attitudes toward death. Further, the extent to which teacher attitudes toward death affect the teaching of a unit on death education has not been studied and emphasizes the need for further study in this area.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

The procedures used in the study are presented in this chapter. Descriptions are given regarding the population of the study and how the instrument was constructed. Methods used for collecting and analyzing the data are also presented.

Objectives

The study was designed to achieve the following objectives: (1) identify the attitudes on the part of Oklahoma vocational home economics teachers toward death, (2) determine the number of days these teachers assign to a unit on death education, (3) identify respondents' preferences of resources for a unit on death education, and (4) determine respondents' interest for training sessions on death education.

Research Design

The type of information desired for this study was gained through a descriptive survey research design. Best (1977, p. 116) discussed descriptive design as a study that describes and interprets, and as a research type primarily concerning present conditions. "It [descriptive design] is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, or trends that are developing." Kerlinger (1973) described survey research as:

that branch of social scientific investigation that studies large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the populations to discover the relative incidence, distribution, and interrelation of sociological and psychological variables The survey researcher is interested in the accurate assessment of the characteristics of whole populations of people Survey research focuses on people, the vital facts of people, and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations, and behavior (pp. 393-394).

The mail questionnaire technique was chosen for gathering information for the survey research. It is described by Compton and Hall (1972, p. 240) as an "instrument that has items or questions to which individuals respond directly. It is usually associated with self-administered instruments composed of items of a closed or fixed alternative type."

The questionnaire method of data collection was determined to have several advantages. A questionnaire can provide anonymity for its respondents who, in turn, give information more freely and can be administered to a large group simultaneously. Respondents can take as much time as they wish to think about answers without feeling pressure to respond. The use of a questionnaire would reduce the influence (and consequent bias) due to the presence of interviewers had they been used. Compton and Hall (1972, p. 240) state that "it is an impersonal instrument with standardizing instructions and wording." It is limited however by the interpretation of the respondents and the possibility of low returns.

Study Population

The population for this study included home economics teachers meeting the following criteria in the state of Oklahoma:

1. Employee of a public school in the state
2. Certified in the state
3. Teacher in a Vocational Home Economics Program

A listing of this population, according to the above criteria along with the school name, mailing address, and vocational district, was obtained from the Home Economics Division of the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education in Stillwater, Oklahoma. It was decided to survey all 450 teachers in the six vocational districts which constituted the population. The State Home Economics Supervisor was contacted and informed of the purpose of the research study. All 450 teachers were contacted by letter (Appendix B) explaining the purpose of the study and the procedural involvement, and asked to participate in the study.

Development of the Instrument

The target population was surveyed through a written questionnaire (Appendix A). The instrument was developed in several stages. First, a review of the literature was conducted to determine if other instruments had been developed for use in other similar studies. The search resulted in the discovery that no other similar studies have been conducted and that Oklahoma vocational consumer and homemaking teachers have not been systematically surveyed to gather information regarding their perceptions and attitudes toward death.

Secondly, to accomplish the objectives of this study it was necessary to develop or to find an instrument which would measure teacher attitudes toward death. In researching the literature concerning death education a scale was located which could be used in determining the

information needed. This instrument, the Templer/McMordie Scale, was chosen as it is a widely used, reliable and valid measure of attitudes toward death (Brown, 1975; Klug, 1976; Lucas, 1974; McMordie, 1978).

Summers (1970, p. 39) defines measurement as the "assignment of numbers to observations according to some set of rules." Since attitudes cannot be measured directly and must be inferred from behavior, the measurement of attitudes becomes complicated. In order to measure attitudes, Remmer (1972) made four assumptions:

. . . that attitudes are measurable, that they vary along a linear continuum, and that measurable attitudes are common to the group, that they are held by many people (p. 14).

At the same time he cautions that attitudes do change and that expressed attitudes (opinions) may at times deviate from real self-attitudes. However, attitude measurement is not only possible, but because attitudes are so important in determining behavior, is desirable.

There are five methods of inferring attitudes as given by Summers (1970). They include:

. . . (1) self-reports of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors; (2) observation of overt behavior; (3) reaction to or interpretation of partially structured stimuli which involve the attitudinal object; (4) performance of 'objective' tasks which involve the attitudinal object; and (5) physiological reactions to the attitudinal object or representations of it (p. 92).

While the self-report method has disadvantages it is to date the most widely used method of attitude measurement according to Summers (1970).

One of the major contributions to attitude measurement was made by Thurstone when he developed one of the first attitude measurement scales, originally published in 1928 (Gage, 1963). Likert's attitude measurement scale, published in 1932 was a refinement which assigned arbitrary

weights to the responses and gave similar results but with less time and effort expended (Gage, 1963).

To determine attitude toward death, a Likert type rating scale, the Templer/McMordie Scale, was used in this study's questionnaire. This is described by Kerlinger (1973) as

. . . a set of attitude items all of which are considered as approximately equal 'attitude value,' and to each of which subjects respond with agreement or disagreement. The scores of the items of such a scale are summed to yield an individual's attitude score (p. 496).

The Templer/McMordie Scale consists of 15 statements in a Likert format which is considered sensitive in discriminating between high and low scorers and capable of making a greater number of discriminations between individuals (McMordie, 1979). Although no actual norms have been established for this scale, a considerable amount of relevant data has been collected both during and subsequent to its construction and validation (Templer, 1970). According to Remmer (1972) the Templer/McMordie Scale is the most reliable and valid measure of attitudes toward death. In fact, of the instruments which have been reported in the literature to assess death attitudes, only the Templer/McMordie Scale has had its reliability and validity determined (Lonetto, 1972).

The completed questionnaire included a section for the attitude scale, a section to gather information about respondents' personal experience with death, teaching a unit on death education, interest for training sessions and instructional materials on death education, and a section to identify respondents' preferences of resources for a unit on death education. Space was provided to allow respondents to include other information about each item as well as comments or recommendations. Suggestions for clarity were offered by the researcher's thesis adviser and committee.

Collection of Data

The research instruments, with a cover letter stating the purpose and importance of the study (Appendix B), were mailed to all 450 vocational consumer and homemaking teachers in the state of Oklahoma on February 15, 1984. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was enclosed for convenience in responding. By March 1, 1984, of the 450 research instruments mailed, a total of 324 were returned, giving a 72 percent response.

Since most school systems across Oklahoma would be entering their spring breaks during the month of March, it was decided not to attempt a follow-up as this would slow responses considerably. Of the 324 questionnaires returned, four were eliminated because they were too incomplete. The remaining 320 responses (71.11 percent) were usable for the purpose of this study.

Analysis of Data

The collected data for this study were coded and transferred to computer cards. The computed results were analyzed according to the objectives formulated for this study. The demographic data from all items in the second section of the questionnaire were analyzed by means of frequency distributions. These distributions were obtained in terms of numbers and percentages for each category of a variable. Point-biserial correlations were computed to test the hypotheses stated in Chapter I.

Determining the significance of the point-biserial correlation was accomplished by use of the t test. The .05 significance level was accepted as the confidence level to be used in the statistical analysis.

According to Kerlinger (1973, p. 170), the .05 level ". . . is neither too high nor too low for most social scientific research."

Tables were constructed to illustrate information from the questionnaire. Additional written comments by the respondents were recorded.

Summary

Chapter III presented the methodology used in this study. The development of the instrument, description of the study population, collection of the data and analysis of the data are described. Chapter IV will present and analyze the data.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gather information regarding attitudes toward death as perceived by the vocational home economics teachers of the state of Oklahoma. This chapter presents a description of the participants, an analysis of the data in accordance with the hypotheses of the study, and the results from the response portion of the research instrument.

The information obtained from this study may have implications for those who are presently teaching and for those who plan to teach a unit on death education. Results of the data will help to identify (1) teacher attitudes toward death, (2) whether or not death education has been taught in the schools, (3) teachers' preferences for resource material on death education, and (4) respondents' interest for inservice education on death and dying.

All written comments, suggestions and recommendations by respondents over the various items comprising this research instrument were recorded in Appendix C of this study. It was decided by the researcher to present this information in this manner for added clarity and because these comments were regarded as valuable and useful data for future study.

Description of Population

In this study the population consisted of the vocational home economics teachers comprising the six vocational districts of Oklahoma. A detailed description of the 320 respondents who participated is summarized in Table I. Items one through five of the questionnaire were designed to obtain background information.

A majority of the respondents, 209 educators (65.3%), had ten or less years of experience teaching vocational home economics. It is readily apparent from Table I that as years of service increased, the number of teachers generally decreased. More than half of the respondents, 206 (64.4%), were under 40 years of age and the greatest proportion, (83.4%) of the teachers were married. Because this study dealt with death and dying, it was of special interest to observe that only four teachers, (1.3%), were widowed.

The distribution of the respondents according to vocational supervisory district resulted in a nearly even representation from each of the six vocational districts across Oklahoma. As reported in Table I, only 38.1 percent of the respondents teach in communities with a population over 6,001. The majority of the educators, 61.9 percent, teach in communities of 6,000 or less, with the greatest percentage, 36.9 percent, teaching in communities of 1,001 to 6,000 population.

Experiences in Relation to Death of Respondents

Items were constructed to gather information about respondents' personal experiences with death. Item six asked teachers if the death of a significant person had occurred within the last two years and the relationship of the deceased to the respondent. Slightly under half

TABLE I
 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING
 TO PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS
 (N=320)

Variable	Number	Percent
<u>Total Years Teaching Home Economics</u>		
5 years or less	106	33.1
6 to 10 years	103	32.2
11 to 15 years	53	16.6
16 to 20 years	21	6.6
21 or more years	33	10.3
no response	4	1.2
<u>Age</u>		
21-30	96	30.0
31-41	110	34.4
41-50	64	20.0
51 and over	44	13.8
no response	6	1.8
<u>Marital Status</u>		
married	267	83.4
divorced	19	5.9
separated	1	.3
single	23	7.2
widowed	4	1.3
no response	6	1.9
<u>Supervisory District</u>		
East	35	10.9
Northeast	38	11.9
North	65	20.3
Southeast	69	21.6
Southwest	43	13.4
West	64	20.0
no response	6	1.9
<u>Population of Community</u>		
1,000 or less	80	25.0
1,001-6,000	118	36.9
6,001-10,000	28	8.8
10,001-30,000	38	11.9
30,001-100,000	31	9.7
100,001 and above	15	4.7
no response	10	3.0

of the reported responses, 139 teachers (43.4%), indicated the loss of a significant individual during the past two years (Table II). The relationship most often identified of the deceased to the respondent was that of a grandmother. The second highest reported relationship was that of an uncle. Table II has listed the 12 most often reported relationships of the deceased to the respondent. It was noteworthy to observe that the category of 'student' was included in this list comprising deaths of significant others.

Item seven asked teachers if they had attended a funeral within the last two years and the relationship of the deceased to the respondent. The majority of the teachers, 271 or approximately 85 percent, had been to one or more funerals within the last two years. Table II has listed the 12 most often reported relationships of the deceased to the respondent. Overwhelmingly, the relationship most often identified of the deceased to the respondent was that of a friend. The second highest reported relationship was that of an uncle followed by that of a grandmother. Interestingly, the category of 'student' ranked fifth in this list comprising attendance at a funeral by respondents within the last two years.

Perceptions of Teachers Toward Death

Education in the School

Items eight through twelve were designed to gather information concerning the teaching of death education in the school. Item eight asked teachers if they felt death education should be taught in the school and at what level. As reported in Table III, the majority of teachers, 278 (86.9%), felt death education should be taught in the

TABLE II
EXPERIENCES IN RELATION TO DEATH OF RESPONDENTS

Item	Response	Number	Percent
Death of a significant person in last 2 years	Yes	139	43.4
	No	176	55.0
	no response	5	1.6
Relation of the deceased to respondent	Grandmother	24	
	Uncle	23	
	Father	16	
	Aunt	12	
	Friend	12	
	Grandfather	11	
	Close friend	11	
	Mother-in-law	11	
	Mother	10	
	Father-in-law	8	
	Cousin	6	
	Student	5	
	Other*	33	
Attendance at a funeral by respondents within last 2 years	Yes	271	84.7
	No	45	14.1
	no response	4	1.2
Relation of the deceased to respondent	Friend	107	
	Uncle	33	
	Grandmother	24	
	Aunt	19	
	Student	17	
	Father	15	
	Cousin	13	
	Mother	11	
	Close friend	11	
	Grandfather	9	
	Mother-in-law	9	
	Church member	8	
	Other*	50	

*See Appendix C for additional listing.

TABLE III
 PERCEPTIONS OF RESPONDENTS CONCERNING THE TEACHING
 OF DEATH EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL

Item	Response	Number	Percent
Should death education be taught in school	Yes	278	86.9
	No	28	8.8
	no response	14	4.3
Level death education should be taught	High School (9-12)	152	47.5
	Junior High (7-8)	41	12.8
	Elementary (1-6)	83	25.9
	no response	44	13.8
Do you teach a unit on death education	Yes	107	33.4
	No	204	63.8
	no response	9	2.8
Days spent teaching death education unit	One	11	10.3
	Two	17	15.9
	Three	22	20.6
	Four	12	11.2
	Five	24	22.4
	Six or more	21	19.6
Do other teachers in your school discuss death education	Yes	38	11.8
	No	275	86.0
	no response	7	2.2
Major subject area of those instructing in death education	Home Economics	9	
	Psychology	6	
	Science	5	
	Sociology	5	
	English	3	
	Special Education	2	
	Business Education	1	
	Vocational Agriculture	1	
Would parents object to death education	Yes	36	11.3
	No	259	80.9
	no response	25	7.8

school. The greatest proportion of respondents, approximately 48 percent, indicated high school to be the level at which death education should be taught. However, approximately 13 percent preferred the junior high level and, interestingly, 26 percent had a preference for the elementary school level. Of the various comments made by respondents (Appendix C) regarding whether or not death education should be taught in the school, most teachers indicated they felt it was the responsibility of parents to teach about death in the home.

Item nine asked the educators if they teach a unit on death education and the number of days spent on this unit. As reported in Table III, the majority, 204 (63.8%) of the educators do not teach a unit on death education. The number of days teachers spend on a death education unit ranged from one to six or more days. It is readily apparent from Table III that of the respondents who indicated they teach about death, the greatest proportion, 22.4 percent, spent five days on the unit. Approximately 21 percent stated they taught about death for three days and, surprisingly, nearly 20 percent of the teachers utilize six or more days of instruction on death education. The category least often chosen by respondents was one day with only 10 percent of the teachers making this response.

By studying Table III, the reader will observe that less than half of the respondents who indicated they felt death education should be taught in the school actually teach a unit on death. Additionally, several teachers wrote comments on item nine (Appendix C) expressing a need for death education in the school and that although they are not presently including death and dying material in the curriculum, they intend to do so in the future.

Item ten requested teachers to indicate the number of years they have taught a unit on death education. Table IV illustrates that the distribution ranged from one year to fifteen years. The greatest percentage, (24.3%), had taught death and dying for only one year. Over half, approximately 60 percent, of the teachers had taught about death for three years or less. Complete information is found in Table IV.

As reported in Table III, item 11 inquired if respondents were aware of any other teacher in their school discussing death education. Most of the study population, 275 (86%), indicated that no other teacher was including a unit on death education. Table III specifies the major subject area of those few individuals who offer instruction in death education. As is readily evident, home economics was clearly the leading discipline reported by respondents as most often including a death education unit.

Item 12 asked teachers if they felt parents would object to a unit on death and dying. The response showed that approximately 81 percent, or 259 teachers, did not feel parents would object; however, it should be noted that many teachers commented (Appendix C) on this item to justify the manner in which they responded. The reason for possible objection by parents to the study of death in the school given by teachers most often was due to religion. Other reasons frequently reported included that death is still a taboo subject and that cultural differences would make it difficult.

Perceptions of Respondents Concerning Teacher Training in Death Education

Items 13 through 16, and item 18 were designed to determine what

TABLE IV
YEARS RESPONDENTS HAVE TAUGHT
DEATH EDUCATION UNITS

Years	N	Percent	Years	N	Percent
One	26	24.3	Nine	4	3.7
Two	19	17.8	Ten	3	2.8
Three	19	17.8	Eleven	1	.9
Four	10	9.3	Twelve	3	2.8
Five	12	11.2	Thirteen	0	.0
Six	3	2.8	Fourteen	1	.9
Seven	2	1.9	Fifteen	2	1.9
Eight	2	1.9	Total	107	100.0

background respondents have in death and dying and their interest for inservice training in death education. Complete information about these items is available in Table V.

Item 13 asked consumer and homemaking teachers if they felt teachers should have some special training in death education. The response indicated approximately 90 percent, 285 teachers, overwhelmingly agreed that teachers need this training. It should be pointed out that no other item on the research instrument received a stronger response than did this question. Comments on this item, available in Appendix C, may be summarized by the response of one teacher who stated 'very definitely.'

Item 14 asked the number of conferences, workshops, or seminars teachers have attended in which the subject matter dealt with death. Of the reported responses, over half, 194 teachers or approximately 61 percent, have attended none and 111, or approximately 35 percent, have attended one or two workshops, conferences, or seminars (Table V). Only 10 teachers indicated they have attended three, four, five or more training sessions in the past.

Table VI is a summary of death and dying workshops attended by teachers in response to item 15 on the research instrument. Only 59 teachers, (18%), have ever taken a college course or workshop dealing with death and dying. By far the greatest proportion, 19 (32%) of those teachers who have had a course on death took it at Oklahoma State University. The institution second most often attended for a death and dying course was Central State University, with nine respondents indicating the Central State campus. Only three teachers took a death education course outside the state of Oklahoma (Table VI).

TABLE V
 PERCEPTIONS OF RESPONDENTS CONCERNING TEACHER TRAINING
 IN DEATH EDUCATION

Item	Response	Number	Percent
Should teachers have special training in death education	Yes	285	89.1
	No	24	7.5
	no response	11	3.4
Number of workshops on death education teachers have attended	Zero	194	60.6
	One	85	26.6
	Two	26	8.1
	Three	7	2.2
	Four	1	.3
	Five or more	2	.6
Have teachers completed a college course on death and dying	Yes	59	18.4
	No	253	79.1
	no response	8	2.5
Would teachers participate in a workshop on death and dying	Yes	248	77.5
	No	57	17.8
	no response	15	4.7
Are teachers interested in death education materials designed for use in Oklahoma	Yes	259	80.9
	No	47	14.7
	no response	14	4.4

TABLE VI
SUMMARY OF DEATH AND DYING WORKSHOPS
ATTENDED BY RESPONDENTS

Variable	Number	Percent
<u>Location</u>		
Oklahoma State University	19	32.2
Central State University	9	15.3
Northwestern Oklahoma State University	8	13.6
Cameron University	2	3.4
Southeastern Oklahoma State University	2	3.4
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma	2	3.4
East Central State University	1	1.7
Oklahoma Baptist University	1	1.7
Pennsylvania University	1	1.7
University of Central Arkansas	1	1.7
University of Oklahoma	1	1.7
North Texas State University	1	1.7
no response	11	18.5
<u>Year Attended</u>		
Prior to 1970	4	6.7
1971-1975	1	1.7
1976-1980	19	32.2
1981 or since	27	45.8
no response	8	13.6

In addition to knowing where teachers took a death education class, item 15 sought information as to when the course was taught. The largest concentration of teachers, 27 or approximately 46 percent, reported they had taken a death and dying course since 1981. Of the respondents, 19 (32%), had taken a course between the years 1976-1980. As reported in Table VI, only five teachers indicated having had a course on death prior to 1976.

Item 16 asked consumer and homemaking teachers if they would be interested in participating in a workshop, seminar or institute dealing with death and dying. By far the greatest proportion of teachers, 248 or 78 percent, indicated they would participate in a workshop on death and dying (Table V). Only 18 percent responded in the negative to this item. As reported in Appendix C, the only concern registered by teachers on this item was the location for a workshop, that is, would it be convenient to attend.

Lastly, in the section of the research instrument designed to determine respondents' interest for inservice training in death education, item 18 was constructed to gather information concerning the best way to present a program on death education. Table VII shows frequencies and percentages of responses by home economics educators toward location preference for inservice education on death and dying. By studying the table, the reader will observe that most teachers, 275, would 'definitely' or 'probably' attend such meetings at August Conference. The second highest preference was for a sub-district professional improvement program with 258 educators indicating they would 'definitely' or 'probably' attend. Mid-Winter Conference rated third among location preferences, and a college or university campus ranked

TABLE VII
 SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS' LOCATION PREFERENCE FOR INSERVICE EDUCATION
 ON DEATH AND DYING

Location	Yes-Definitely Would Attend	Probably Would Attend	Undecided	Probably Would Not Attend	No-Would Not Attend
August Conference	195 (65.4%)	80 (26.8%)	10 (3.4%)	10 (3.4%)	3 (1.0%)
Sub-District Profes- sional Improvement Program	194 (66.4%)	64 (22.0%)	14 (4.8%)	12 (4.1%)	8 (2.7%)
Mid-Winter Conference	156 (54.5%)	90 (31.5%)	16 (5.6%)	15 (5.2%)	9 (3.2%)
College or University	35 (12.1%)	81 (27.8%)	66 (22.7%)	72 (24.7%)	37 (12.7%)
Talk Back Television	8 (2.8%)	28 (10.0%)	39 (13.9%)	104 (37.0%)	102 (36.3%)

fourth as a location for instruction. The least popular method was talk back television with only 13 percent selecting this approach.

Respondents were given the opportunity to list 'other' methods they felt might be appropriate for inservice education on death and dying. Either correspondence study or a weekend workshop were suggested most often by respondents as other ways to offer instruction in addition to those identified in Table VII. Complete comments and suggestions for item 18 are found in Appendix C.

Summary of Respondents' Interest

Indications for Resources

Items 17 and 19 were designed to gather information about respondents' preferences for instructional materials and resources for a unit on death education. For this section the researcher attempted to construct questions which would indicate areas of greatest interest among the teachers as well as allow flexibility of individual responses so that the educators might share resource information they have found to be effective.

Item 17 asked teachers if they would be interested in specifically designed death education materials incorporating Oklahoma laws and customs. As reported in Table V, respondents overwhelmingly endorsed the development of such materials with 259 teachers, or approximately 81 percent, indicating an interest. Comments to this item are listed in Appendix C and reinforced the affirmative answer supplied by the majority of teachers.

To facilitate the analysis of resource preferences for a unit on death education, the respondents were asked to indicate their degree of

interest for each of 11 instructional resources by use of a number scale provided in item 19. Space was provided for the listing of any additional resource information by respondents. Table VIII shows the summary of the study population by interest indications for these resources.

Most teachers favored films/filmstrips, with 225 of the respondents indicating this preference. However, guest speakers were a strong second choice with 222 teachers definitely interested in this type of resource. As reported in Table VIII, student activity exercises ranked third as a resource among 186 teachers. The next three types of resources according to rank were field trips, television/movies, and video-cassettes. Based upon comments supplied by respondents, and reported in Appendix C, the main reason these resources scored no higher than they did centered around the financial ability of each individual school system and a basic lack of equipment as in the case of video-cassettes.

Brochures/pamphlets, manual/textbook, and magazine/newspaper were the next three resources reported by rank in that order (Table VIII). Comments by respondents on these resources indicated a willingness on the part of teachers to read these materials, but a death education unit would be too brief to expect students to read them. Of the 11 resources suggested, teachers were least interested in audio-cassette/records, with only 65 individuals indicating this preference. Comments on this type of resource may be summarized by the response of one teacher who stated, "Most students will loose interest if the material is not visual."

Item 20 asked consumer and homemaking teachers what problems, if any, they have encountered teaching a death education unit. All responses were recorded in Appendix C and may be categorized into the

TABLE VIII
SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS' INTEREST INDICATIONS FOR RESOURCES

Resource	Definitely Interested	Somewhat Interested	Undecided	Definitely Uninterested
Films/Filmstrips	225 (74.75%)	63 (20.93%)	7 (2.33%)	6 (1.99%)
Guest Speakers	222 (74.25%)	62 (20.74%)	6 (2.00%)	9 (3.01%)
Student Activity Exercises	186 (65.72%)	62 (21.91%)	21 (7.42%)	14 (4.95%)
Field Trips	176 (60.07%)	62 (21.16%)	35 (11.95%)	20 (6.83%)
Television/Movies	165 (57.29%)	82 (28.47%)	23 (7.99%)	18 (6.25%)
Video-Cassettes	142 (51.08%)	77 (27.70%)	29 (10.43%)	30 (10.79%)
Brochures/Pamphlets	133 (46.67%)	111 (38.95%)	24 (8.42%)	17 (5.96%)
Manual/Textbook	122 (44.36%)	103 (37.45%)	24 (8.74%)	26 (9.45%)
Magazine/Newspaper	98 (34.75%)	131 (46.45%)	25 (8.87%)	28 (9.93%)
Books/Reading List	97 (35.02%)	120 (43.32%)	34 (12.27%)	26 (9.39%)
Audio-Cassette/Records	65 (24.16%)	93 (34.57%)	54 (20.08%)	57 (21.19%)

following six areas by rank: (1) reluctance of students to talk about death, (2) teacher has not taught a unit on death, (3) lack of resources or training of teacher in death education, (4) none or no problems, (5) loss of a relative or close friend by students, and (6) shelterization of students from death by parents. A seventh area labeled 'other' was established to record miscellaneous responses not readily categorized into the preceding six classifications.

Of the educators who wrote comments on item 20, the majority, or 46 responses, indicated a reluctance on the part of students to discuss death. However, several teachers noted that even though students complained at first, they eventually were amazed at how much they need to know and also found the subject interesting.

According to rank, the second most often written comment came from the 23 respondents who stated they have not taught a death education unit. This was closely followed by 21 educators who indicated they did not have enough resources or knowledge about the subject. However, many expressed an interest in teaching a unit and felt their students definitely needed information on death and dying.

Nineteen teachers responded to question 20 simply by stating 'none' in the space provided, although a few teachers expanded on this answer. Complete information is found in Appendix C. Twelve educators indicated that the problem they have encountered was dealing with students who have recently lost a relative or friend. However, more than one teacher stated that if those students who suffered a loss shared their experience it was very helpful for the rest of the class.

Finally, the category or area mentioned by seven educators as a problem in teaching death education was the shelterization of students

from the topic of death by parents and the community as a whole. Here, the main comment was that death education was a 'touchy subject.' A variety of other comments were made by vocational home economics teachers to item 20 and recorded in Appendix C. Many of these comments were of a personal nature and regarded as valuable and useful data for future study.

Attitudes of Teachers Toward Death

The central variable identified for this study was the teacher attitude. The attitude was measured by the Templer/McMordie Scale, a Likert type rating scale consisting of 15 statements. The Likert technique, as described by Kerlinger (1973), allows a person to indicate how strongly he approves or disapproves of each statement. The Templer/McMordie instrument was developed into a seven-point scale with Very Strongly Agree - Very Strongly Disagree response categories with Neutral the mid-value category of response.

In scoring the instrument, the response to a scale option for each statement is assigned a number from 1 to 7. An individual's attitude toward death, or anxiety level, is assumed to be reflected by the summated score of all the items. The higher the number obtained, the greater the level of death concern.

Scale scores for the 318 teachers completing the Templer/McMordie instrument ranged from 23 to 94. The mean for the study population was 57.72, and the standard deviation was 11.607. Complete frequency distribution of respondents' attitudes toward death can be found in Table IX.

TABLE IX
GROUPED FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF
TEMPLER/McMORDIE SCALE SCORES
(N=318)

Teacher Scores	Frequency
91 and above	1
81 - 90	8
71 - 80	37
61 - 70	93
51 - 60	113
41 - 50	45
31 - 40	16
21 - 30	5
20 and below	0

Analysis of Hypotheses

The formulated hypotheses were tested through statistical procedures provided by the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Point-biserial correlation coefficients provided the statistical means for analyzing the data in accordance with the formulated hypotheses. Significant levels were determined for the statistical procedure at the .05 alpha level. Substantive interpretations of statistically significant correlations were determined by the conventions or levels described by Davis (1971). These conventions were accepted by the researcher for statistical interpretation. The convention or level statements were:

Value	Appropriate Phrase
+.70 or higher	A very strong positive association.
+.50 to +.69	A substantial positive association.
+.30 to +.49	A moderate positive association.
+.10 to +.29	A low positive association.
+.01 to +.09	A negligible positive association.
.00	No association.
-.01 to -.09	A negligible negative association.
-.10 to -.29	A low negative association.
-.30 to -.49	A moderate negative association.
-.50 to -.69	A substantial negative association.
-.70 or lower	A very strong negative association.
	(Davis, 1971, p. 49)

Information for the analysis of the hypotheses was measured through responses from the Templer/McMordie Scale and the background information section of the instrument. Each item from the research instrument which respectively pertained to or represented each of the variables under study, was tested for significant correlation to the Templer/McMordie score through a modification technique of the Pearson 5, namely point-biserial correlation procedures. The point-biserial correlation may be used when a coefficient of relationship is desired between one measure that is continuous and another that is dichotomous (Bruning, 1968).

Complete correlation information between the combined teacher attitude score on the Templer/McMordie instrument and the other variables under study is illustrated in Table X.

Hypothesis one stated: There will be no significant relationship between the attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale and current opinion of respondents as to whether death education should be taught in the school. Item eight on the research instrument was concerned with the variable of teacher opinion as to whether death education should be taught in the school. This variable was correlated to the Templer/McMordie score through the point-biserial correlation statistical procedure. A correlation of .02 indicated a negligible positive association (Davis, 1971). As reported in Table X, results indicated no statistical significance. Hypothesis one was accepted, as there was no significant relationship between teachers' opinion as to whether death education should be taught in the school and their attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale.

Hypothesis two stated: There will be no significant relationship between the attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale and indication by respondents as to whether they teach a unit on death education. Item nine on the research instrument asked the educators if they teach a unit on death education. Point-biserial correlation of this variable with the Templer/McMordie score resulted in a correlation of .04 which, according to Davis (1971), is a negligible positive association. Hypothesis two was accepted, as there was no significant relationship between respondents' attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale and whether or not they teach a unit on death education.

TABLE X
CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDY VARIABLES
AND TEMPLER/McMORDIE SCORE

Study Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Level of Significance
Should death education be taught in school	.0234	.342
Do respondents teach a unit on death education	.0392	.246
Death of a significant person in last 2 years	.0236	.338
Attendance at a funeral by respondents with last 2 years	.1336*	.009

*Significant at the .01 level

Hypothesis three stated: There will be no significant relationship between the attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale and loss of a significant person within the last two years by respondents. Item six on the research instrument was concerned with measuring this variable. After statistical analysis procedures were completed, a correlation of .02 was obtained. As reported in Table X, results indicated no statistical significance. Hypothesis three was accepted, as there was no significant relationship between the loss of a significant person within the last two years by these teachers and their attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale.

Hypothesis four stated: There will be no significant relationship between the attitude score on the Templer/McMordie Scale and attendance at a funeral within the last two years by these teachers. Item seven on the research instrument was designed to measure this variable concerning funeral attendance by respondents. This variable was correlated to the Templer/McMordie score through the point-biserial correlation statistical procedure.

Results disclosed the highest correlation of any of the variables under study. Substantively, a correlation of .13 indicated a low positive association (Davis, 1971). However, examination of the data indicated that this finding was statistically significant below the .01 level. Hypothesis four was not accepted for the variable concerning funeral attendance by respondents. There was a significant relationship between the combined attitude score of the vocational home economics teachers and attendance at a funeral within the last two years. Complete correlation information is shown in Table X.

Teacher Responses and Comments

Teachers were given an opportunity to register any comments or suggestions in space provided at the end of the questionnaire. Surprisingly, 73 individuals commented on death education, and, generally, the responses were as varied as those making them. Although teachers often commented from personal experiences, the general thrust of most of the educators' comments centered around the idea that they felt it is important for students to learn to deal with death. A complete listing of the teacher comments and suggestions can be reviewed in Appendix C.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study. The chapter contained a description of the respondents, a discussion of the consumer and homemaking teachers' responses to the research instrument items, and an analysis of the data in accordance with the hypotheses of the study. Correlation statistical procedures produced the means for data analysis.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to gather information regarding attitudes toward death as perceived by the vocational home economics teachers of the state of Oklahoma. Identification of teacher attitudes toward death can enable educational personnel responsible for curriculum development to more successfully implement death education units of instruction.

The investigation was designed to identify (1) teacher attitudes toward death, (2) whether or not death education has been taught in the schools, (3) teachers' preferences for resource material on death education, and (4) respondents' interest for inservice education on death and dying.

Four null hypotheses were developed for testing the data in this research study. In brief, the hypotheses were as follows:

1. The relationship between the teacher attitude toward death and their opinion as to whether it should be taught in the school.
2. The relationship between the teacher attitude toward death and whether they teach a unit on death education.
3. The relationship between the teacher attitude toward death and the loss of a significant person within the last two years by these teachers.

4. The relationship between the teacher attitude toward death and their attendance at a funeral within the last two years.

The population for this study included all the certified teachers who were teaching in vocational home economics programs in the state of Oklahoma during the 1983-84 school year. The listing of the population was obtained from the Home Economics Division of the State Department of Vocational Education for Oklahoma in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

A questionnaire to identify selected variables was constructed by the researcher. An established instrument, the Tessler/McMordie Scale, was used to identify the respondents' attitudes toward death. The reliability and validity of the instrument was discussed in Chapter III research design. A set of open response questions were developed to give the researcher insight into possible inservice program needs of the teachers and possible curriculum needs for the teacher preparatory programs.

The completed questionnaire included a section for the attitude scale, a section to gather information about respondents' personal experience with death, teaching a unit on death education, interest for training sessions and instructional materials on death education, and a section to identify respondents' preferences of resources for a unit on death education.

The research instruments were mailed to all 450 vocational consumer and homemaking teachers in the state of Oklahoma during February of 1984. The number of usable returns was 320 which represented 71 percent of the study population.

The data was analyzed through correlation statistical procedures utilizing the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Point-biserial correlation procedures were used to determine relationships as outlined by the hypotheses. Statistical analysis substantiated the following results:

1. The opinion of respondents as to whether death education should be taught in the school did not significantly relate to teacher attitude toward death.

2. The indication by respondents as to whether they teach a unit on death education did not significantly relate to teacher attitude toward death.

3. The loss of a significant person within the last two years by respondents did not significantly relate to teacher attitude toward death.

4. The attendance at a funeral within the last two years by these teachers DID significantly relate to teacher attitude toward death.

Conclusions

A description of the study participants includes the following observations. Almost 66 percent of the teachers had ten or less years of experience teaching vocational home economics. More than half of the respondents, 64 percent, were under 40 years of age and the greatest proportion, 84 percent, were married. The distribution of the respondents according to vocational supervisory district resulted in a nearly even representation from each of the six vocational districts across Oklahoma. The majority of educators, 62 percent, teach in communities of 6,000 or less which can be expected from the rural, small town nature of the state of Oklahoma.

Based on the data analysis for this study, the following conclusions were drawn. Concerning experiences in relation to death by these teachers, most respondents, 55 percent, had not experienced the loss of a significant person in the last two years. However, when a death had occurred, the relationship most often identified of the deceased to the respondent was that of a grandmother. Table II listed the 12 most often reported relationships of the deceased to the respondent. Interestingly, the category of 'student' was included in this list.

In contrast, whereas most teachers had not encountered the death of a significant other, the majority of respondents, 85 percent, had attended a funeral within the last two years. In most cases, teachers reported the relationship of the deceased to the respondent was that of a friend. However, an important finding of the study was that the category of 'student' ranked fifth in this listing indicating that there is a significant impact on schools of student deaths each year throughout the state of Oklahoma. Clearly, because of the percussive death of a student has on a school system, there is a need for instruction in death education by students and teachers alike. Respondents strongly agreed with this conclusion as 87 percent of the teachers indicated they felt death education should be taught in the school.

As reported in this study, most educators do not teach a unit on death education. Death, unfortunately, still remains a taboo topic in most circles. However, the need for formal and informal education enabling people of all ages to learn to cope with death has become evident. By studying Table III, it can be observed that less than half of the respondents who indicated they felt death education should be taught in the school actually teach a unit on death. Additionally,

several teachers wrote comments (Appendix C) expressing a need for death education in the school and that although they are not presently including death and dying material in the curriculum, they intend to do so in the future. It was further learned through this study that most teachers who have taught about death and dying, have done so for only the past three years.

When asked to specify which discipline generally approached the subject of death in their school, most respondents named home economics. Because of the focus of home economics on the individual and family life, the consumer and homemaking teacher functions in a unique role in equipping students with attitudes toward life, which includes an acceptance of death as well as an examination of fears and feelings toward death.

A majority of the teachers did not feel parents would object to the study of death in the school. A variety of reasons were suggested by the educators for possible objection by parents to include religion, death still a taboo subject, and cultural differences.

Concerning teacher training in death education, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that teachers need this training. It should be pointed out that no other item on the research instrument received a stronger response than did this question. Additionally, most respondents indicated they would be willing to attend a death and dying workshop, conference, or seminar. The major concern registered by teachers on this item was the location for a workshop, that is, where it would be convenient to attend. The preference for most teachers was August Conference or a sub-district professional improvement program. Results further indicated that talk back television was the least popular method for instruction on death education.

Educators overwhelmingly endorsed the development of death education materials specifically designed to incorporate Oklahoma laws and customs. To supplement a unit on death education, teachers favored certain types of resources with films, guest speakers, and student activity exercises ranking the highest among 11 suggested resources (Table VIII).

Consumer and homemaking teachers were asked, as a final item in this study, what problems, if any, they have encountered teaching a death education unit. The majority of educators indicated a reluctance on the part of students to discuss death. However, several teachers noted that even though students complained at first, they eventually were amazed at how much they need to know and also found the subject interesting.

Teaching about death can be a rewarding and satisfying experience for teacher and student alike. As a subject for exploration within the classroom, it meets the criteria of being intrinsically interesting, intellectually challenging, and personally and socially relevant. Death education, therefore, provides an opportunity for students to begin to face death in a supportive environment. It is the belief of the writer that a unit on death education can help improve a student's attitude toward self and his environment. Curriculum planning to include a unit on death education could result in better teaching and better learning experiences, and is the rational way of responding to a changing society.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study and the review of literature the following recommendations for research and inservice are proposed:

1. It is recommended that this research study be conducted in another state so that comparisons might be made.
2. It is recommended that after death education units of instruction have been in effect for several years follow-up studies be conducted to note any changes or interests which might give a clearer picture of the experiences, attitudes, and needs of students to facilitate the personal growth process.
3. It is recommended that curriculum planners include a unit on death education for the schools in the state of Oklahoma.
4. It is recommended that designers of inservice training programs for vocational consumer and homemaking teachers note areas of interest and need expressed by respondents in this study which may help them in planning for inservice training.
5. It is recommended that the findings of this study be made available to home economics teacher educators who are working with future home economics teachers.

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APPENDIX

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

THOMAS BIRD

1900-1905

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH STUDY INSTRUMENT

T/M SCALE

Code

DIRECTIONS: This form contains a series of statements. Read each one, decide how you feel about it and indicate by checking (✓) in the appropriate column how you feel about it. Try to use the neutral ratings as little as possible. Please answer all items.

1-Very Strongly Agree 2-Strongly Agree 3-Agree 4-Neutral 5-Disagree
6-Strongly Disagree 7-Very Strongly Disagree

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. I am very much afraid to die.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. The thought of death seldom enters my mind.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. It doesn't make me nervous when people talk about death.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. I dread to think about having to have an operation.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. I am not at all afraid to die.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. I am not particularly afraid of getting cancer.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. The thought of death never bothers me.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. I am often distressed by the way time flies so rapidly.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. I fear dying a painful death.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. The subject of life after death troubles me greatly.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. I am really scared of having a heart attack.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. I often think about how short life really is.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. I shudder when I hear people talking about World War III.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. The sight of a dead body is horrifying to me.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. I feel the future holds nothing for me to fear.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

DIRECTIONS: Please place a check mark (✓) on the blank which corresponds to the most appropriate response for you.

Section I

- How many years have you taught as a vocational home economics teacher, including the present year?
 - _____ less than 5 years
 - _____ 6 to 10 years
 - _____ 11 to 15 years
 - _____ 16 to 20 years
 - _____ 21 or more years
- Age: _____ 21-30 _____ 31-40 _____ 41-50 _____ 51 and over
- Marital Status:
 - _____ married _____ divorced _____ separated _____ single _____ widowed
- Vocational Supervisory District in which your school is located:
 - _____ East _____ Northeast _____ North _____ Southeast _____ Southwest _____ West
- Size of community in which your school is located:
 - _____ 1,000 or less _____ 1,001-6,000 _____ 6,001-10,000 _____ 10,001-30,000 _____ 30,001-100,000
 - _____ 100,001 and above

Section II

6. Has there been a death of a significant person in your life within the last 2 years? Yes ____ No ____
If yes, what was the relationship? _____
7. Have you attended a funeral within the last 2 years? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, what was the relationship? _____
8. Do you feel death education should be taught in the school? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, at what level(s):
____high school grades 9-12) ____junior high school (grades 7-8) ____elementary school (grades 1-6)
9. Do you teach a unit on death education in your school? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, please specify the number of days you spend on a death education unit:
____ one day ____ two days ____ three days ____ four days ____ five days ____ six or more days
10. If you answered "yes" to question number nine please specify the number of years you have taught a unit on death education: ____years
11. Are you aware of any other teacher in your school teaching death education? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, please specify teacher's major subject area: _____
12. Do you feel most parents of your students would object to a unit on death education? Yes ____ No ____
If yes, why do you feel parents would object?
13. Do you feel teachers should have some special training in death education? Yes ____ No ____
14. How many conferences, workshops, or seminars have you attended in which the subject matter dealt with death?
____zero ____one ____two ____three ____four ____five or more; specify number _____
15. Have you ever taken a college course or workshop dealing with death and dying? Yes ____ No ____
If yes, where? _____ When? _____
16. Would you be interested in participating in a workshop, seminar or institute dealing with death and dying? Yes ____ No ____
17. Would you like to see death education materials incorporating Oklahoma laws and customs designed specifically for teachers in the state of Oklahoma? Yes ____ No ____
18. How do you feel is the best way to present a program on death education for vocational home economics teachers? For each method listed below indicate the degree to which you would attend by writing in the blank in the left margin the number of the scale that best represents your degree of preference for each method.

1	2	3	4	5
Yes-Definitely Would Attend	Probably Would Attend	Undecided	Probably Would Not Attend	No-Would Not Attend

- ____ Sub-District Professional Improvement Program
 ____ Mid-Winter Conference
 ____ August Conference
 ____ College or University Campus (credit course)
 ____ Talk Back Television
 ____ Other: _____

Section III

19. Based upon your interests, what resources should be included in a unit on death education? For each resource listed below please indicate your degree of interest by writing in the blank provided the number of the scale that best represents the degree of interest you have for each resource. If you have used any of the resources listed below, please identify specifically what the resource included using the space provided to the right of each resource.

	1	2	3	4
	Definitely Interested	Somewhat Interested	Undecided	Definitely Uninterested
___ films/filmstrips:				
___ television/movies:				
___ video-cassettes:				
___ audio-cassette/records:				
___ guest speakers:				
___ field trips:				
___ magazines/newspapers:				
___ brochures/pamphlets:				
___ books/reading list:				
___ manual/textbook:				
___ student activity exercises:				
___ other, please specify:				

20. What problems, if any, have you encountered teaching a death education unit?

If you have any comments or suggestions, please use the space below.

Thank you for participating in this study. If you wish to receive a copy of the major results of the study, check here _____. Please return by March 1, 1984.

APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE

C E N T R A L S T A T E U N I V E R S I T Y

Funeral Service Department

February 15, 1984

Dear Vocational Home Economics Teacher:

As you probably know, teachers are confronted time and again in dealing with students who have experienced the loss of a classmate or family member. An open discussion of dying and death is uncommon in the modern family's experience.

Joyce Thompson indicates vocational home economics teachers desire more information concerning death education. As a part of my graduate work at Oklahoma State University, I am carrying out a study designed to add insights into the attitudes of vocational home economics teachers toward death. You have been selected to participate in this state-wide study.

Enclosed is the instrument being used to collect the information. Will you please complete the questionnaire and return to me in the stamped, self-addressed envelope by March 1, 1984? No teacher or school will be identified in the results of this study. All responses will be kept in strict confidence. Code numbers are used for the purpose of recording that your response has been received.

I sincerely appreciate your participation and cooperation in this study.

(Signed)
Kenneth L. Curl, Instructor
Dept. of Funeral Service
Central State University

(Signed)
Elaine Jorgenson, Ed.D.
Thesis Adviser
Oklahoma State University

(Signed)
Joyce Thompson
State Supervisor
Vocational Home Economics

APPENDIX C

COMMENTS MADE BY RESPONDENTS

Item 6. Has there been a death of a significant person in your life within the last 2 years? If yes, what was the relationship?

'Other' relationships of the deceased to respondent not listed in Table II: Husband, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, nephew, niece, grandson, brother, sister, child, great aunt, fellow teacher, college classmate, great grandmother, great nephew, high school principal, former principal, several older church members, aunt that I lived with.

Item 7. Have you attended a funeral within the last 2 years? If yes, what was the relationship?

'Other' relationships of the deceased to respondent not listed in Table II: Father-in-law, husband, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, nephew, niece, grandson, brother, sister, child, fellow teacher, school principal, former principal, great aunt, great grandmother, great uncle, great nephew, aunt that I lived with.

Item 8. Do you feel death education should be taught in the school?

Call it a different name.
To some extent at all ages.
I'm not sure - perhaps.
Varying degrees at all levels.
Depends upon content of unit and student attitude.
I am undecided about this.
I believe that some things should be taught in the home.
Schools are being expected to completely raise other people's children. When are parents going to accept responsibilities?

Item 9. Do you teach a unit on death education in your school?

Informally, we have guest speakers one day and have discussed the aspect of death as having to do with cost of funerals, wills, insurance and property in the family relations classes. We take a study tour to a funeral home and the funeral director comes to my class.
I would like to, but have not planned one yet.
My husband teaches the class and gives tours of our funeral home.
I have taught death education in family living classes, grade 12, for the past 12 years. Many positive experiences from this unit.
No, but I plan to.
I have in the past.

Item 12. Do you feel most parents of your students would object to a unit on death education? If yes, why do you feel parents would object?

Because of the question of religion.
Parents would not have objected if not for current issue of church and state separation - don't mind as long as you don't force own beliefs or really talk about life.

- Item 12. Feel the subject matter is too morbid, it would depend on how comfortable the parents are about death.
 (Cont'd) Some parents might feel it inappropriate especially if students have recently experienced the loss of a close relative or friend.
 Taboo subject.
 They don't like to think about it.
 Have survey from advisory committee to consider this.
 In order to protect their children from the cruel reality of death.
 Causing stress or worry on part of child.
 Cultural differences - American Indian as opposed to white Anglo-Saxon.
 A few because it might upset students.
 Might on grounds of differing cultures and customs varying.
 Might question reasons - feel waste of time.
 Most of the parents in this community are very narrow-minded when it comes to teaching topics like this in school.
 Don't know.
 Maybe due to religion.
 There would be a vocal minority - object on religious reasons.
 Parents might feel uncomfortable if they were asked to attend.
 Many parents might feel threatened by the subject.
 Don't really know.
 I don't know on this question, maybe.
 Not sure, depends on how it would be approached, money, etc.
 I really don't know - many feel it is morbid.
 There are always comments on necessity or relevancy but also comments of appreciation.
 Most would feel it should be taught in the church.
 Unsure.
 Because they fear the subject.
 Think it should be taught at home or church.
 Because of different religious beliefs.
 They still feel it necessary to "protect" children from life/death situations.
 Have objected - learn about it soon enough.
 For religious reasons and for those who have had a recent death in their family.
 Should be taught within family and church.
 Taboo like sex.
 Religious reasons.
 I think they might object if they are unaware of how and what is being taught.
 It would require some P.R. work.

Item 13. Do you feel teachers should have some special training in death education?

- Very definitely (This statement was made by many respondents)
 Depends on person.
 If we are to teach it.
 Definitely if expected to teach this subject.
 Perhaps a short course.

Item 13. Maybe some.

(Cont'd) It could be included with marriage and family relationships - not a semester of it - seminar maybe.

That is why I stopped.

If they teach this unit.

It would be helpful.

Most adults are very uncomfortable with the subject.

If they have had no experience with death.

Some are more or less sensitive to death and its effect on youth.

For the purpose of individual counseling - not a specific unit in class.

No, in most instances.

Item 16. Would you be interested in participating in a workshop, seminar or institute dealing with death and dying?

Possibly.

Not right now, maybe later.

Am retiring, but would have before.

If convenient.

If close and not too long.

If local and August Conference.

I already have good curriculum, but am open to new ideas.

Depends on location and date.

Item 18. Method of presenting a program on death education. (In addition to those listed on the questionnaire, teachers made the following comments).

I would prefer to have a seminar on death and dying for a professional type meeting.

My father passed away 15 months ago and I'm not really ready to spend much time studying this area.

Weekend workshop or seminar would be effective.

Local inservice meeting would be good.

Two-day workshop.

Depends on location.

Would depend on length of time.

One or two week college seminar.

Credit course at a local school - not everyone lives within a short distance of a college campus.

Correspondence course.

Staff development.

Two day conference on campus.

Workshop or seminar for two days.

One or two day workshop.

Area meeting.

Item 19. What resources do you think should be included in a unit on death education?

Books by Kubler-Ross.

Item 19. A movie of a real situation such as On Golden Pond.
 (Cont'd) Tour of a funeral home.
 Refer to obituaries.
 Music-poetry.
 Video-tape TV shows on death.
 Most students will loose interest if not visual material.
 National Funeral Directors Association has some excellent resources.
Parents' Magazine has series on Children in Crisis (filmstrips).
 Guest speakers include: funeral directors, pastors, ministers, priests, counselors, nurses, hospice workers, and parents who have lost children and belong to a bereaved parents' group (such as Compassionate Friends).
Healing Grief by Amy H. Jensen.
 Pamphlets from funeral home.
 I always watch for appropriate articles to share with my students.
 Very hard to get majority of students to do outside readings. Educators might.
The Private World of Dying Children by Blueband Langner.
Death Be Not Proud/Don't Take My Grief Away From Me by Doug Manning.
The Fall of Freddy the Leaf by Leo Buscaglia.

Item 20. What problems, if any, have you encountered teaching a death education unit?

I haven't attempted to teach a unit on death because I do not feel properly informed.
 Resistance from the students - they are uncomfortable with the subject.
 Students are unable to discuss without emotions and some dislike discussions.
 I have not taught a unit.
 None, since I have not taught it so far.
 Usually the students don't want to talk about death unless they have lost someone close and want to talk about it. They think it is morbid.
 Overcoming the student's acquired fear of death and funeral service held by most of the parents and other educators.
 This can be done by information to parents and students and support of other school staff.
 I do not teach a death education unit.
 How to approach it. I had a speaker from a funeral home and he was great and it started good discussions. We also had a death of a classmate which really started comments and made me aware that (we) schools do not deal with death effectively.
 Teaching ideas and thoughts concerning death. They do not want to talk about death and dying.
 Upsetting the students.
 Not feeling qualified to do a good job.
 Student's past experiences and attitudes. Also, different religious beliefs of the students.

Item 20. None, no one wants to study or talk about death but they listen
 (Cont'd) and are really interested before completion of the unit.
 Have not taught it in class.
 Students do not like to talk about death and strongly resist
 the subject.
 Do not teach it.
 I do not teach it.
 Background, knowledge, materials.
 I have not taught a unit.
 At first the response is "We do not want to talk about funerals".
 I teach all 9th graders - I'm not sure they could accept it at
 this point in their lives because of all the other new
 problems, experiences and emotional changes they are going
 through at this stage of their lives.
 Have not taught one - used only in connection with Family In
 Stress unit and to allow classmates to "talk through" death
 of students in an auto accident.
 Students who have lost a close relative sometimes do not react
 well.
 It is difficult to insert in a teaching unit except on the life
 cycle of families. Death education should also be taught in
 advanced child development.
 When students fill out information sheets they usually have to
 seek help from parents. Many parents think some of the
 questions are too personal, some do not want to talk about
 what death of a family member might mean, and some parents
 refuse to share any information because they themselves can-
 not deal with the subject. Some students are really "up
 tight" about visiting a funeral home.
 None, because I teach it from first hand experience.
 Have not taught a unit.
 Have just discussed in class when a student would bring it up.
 The attitude that children should be sheltered from this
 painful experience.
 Students complain a lot at first when start on it but eventually
 are amazed at how much you need to know.
 Not interested - at first!
 Sometimes it really frightens students, particularly if someone
 they know has an illness which could lead to death.
 Kids are horrified about death and do not want to talk about it.
 They do not want to believe it's a real possibility in their
 life.
 Many have only attended one or two funerals if any by senior
 year.
 Many people feel it is morbid to attempt to deal with such an
 emotional subject in a cold, logical manner. High school
 students are especially sensitive, emotionally, it seems.
 Young people often have a hard time identifying with "death."
 They are lulled into thinking only the "old" die. The old
 saying holds true: "It won't happen to me!".
 When touring the local funeral home some students do not want
 to go, especially if there has been a recent death in their
 family. I don't make them go. Some are nervous about tour-
 ing the prep room.

Item 20. Funeral home would not cooperate. No materials.

(Cont'd) Students do not like to think about it.

I have tried and many of my students flatly refuse to stay in a classroom and discuss the subject. Having experienced the trauma of caring for a mother dying of cancer I see the need for this subject to be taught. The students that refuse have never come face to face with death.

I do not feel that I know enough about this subject and I have a hard time introducing it to my students.

An inability for some students to project their feelings and refusal by some students to talk, think or even accept the prospect of death occurring to people they are close to.

Have never taught a unit on death.

Not enough information available.

Not any real problem - the girls feel that it is a depressing subject, but they admit that they will have to face it some day.

Lack of teaching resources available for students use.

Lack of community support.

Selling the idea to children and their parents.

Students are reluctant to talk of their own death.

Any controversial subject must be cleared with the principal.

He sent me to the superintendent. By the time I got permission from everyone, it did not seem like such a good idea anymore.

I nearly always have at least one student in the class who has recently experienced a death in their home to whom the subject is most upsetting. These are deaths of parents or siblings.

None since it is such a short unit, reading and discussing the textbook, discussing personal experiences and sometimes speakers.

Students who have not attended funerals, and their fears of dealing with death.

Have not taught.

Lack of available resources.

Student initial uneasiness with the subject.

Knowing the facts about funeral arrangements, and greeting the students with the new subject.

Convincing the students that the subject is something which needs to be dealt with. Making the field trip to the funeral home.

Have plans made and have a crisis occur, such as the death of a student, thus forcing a change of timing for the unit. The funeral home may be too busy due to their demands for funerals when we are scheduled, therefore must re-schedule.

Lack of interest and resources.

Uneasiness of students.

I have not taught a unit.

Students at the time were not even remotely interested, but may be now because we have had two students die within a week of each other. One died of complications from M.D. and the other was killed in a car accident.

Teaching it the next year after a student was killed in an auto accident during the summer.

- Item 20. No major problems but a concern has been getting students to know death can happen to the young. Having two high school students die within the past two years has left an impact and students need answers - such as, "Why?".
(Cont'd)
- I have lost a teenage son in an auto wreck. Sometimes a little hard to carry on; however, I feel students relate better to me in this situation.
- Resources!!
- Negative feelings from students - some don't want to think about it.
- One problem was finding materials and most students are a little skeptic of visiting a funeral home, but I think that it is the best thing possible.
- Haven't taught one.
- One year there was a death in our school at the time I was teaching the unit. That was rather difficult.
- Will be teaching the unit next fall.
- Having enough resources and knowledge about the subject.
- Could be depressing to the students.
- I taught a unit on death education about seven years ago. Since that time, I have had two students tell me how much it helped them when they had a family member to die (father). One student (a boy) said he thought it was useless until he was left with the responsibility of making the funeral arrangements because his mother could not cope. He said it was easier because being in the funeral home was not so strange since we had visited one on a field trip. We had an excellent tour guide that was very relevant and respectful. I also had a guide one time that tried to be too humorous with the subject and it was not received well. We have had YHO programs on this subject which were well attended by young adults.
- Field trips - one or two did not want to participate so I excluded them. Others - very educational.
- Some students naturally consider it morbid to talk about. It is also common to have students who have recently lost a loved one - they may get very upset being forced to bring up all those unpleasant feelings.
- One student did not want to go to the local funeral home. My students have been very interested and show a great need is filled in this unit.
- The use of brochures does not really deal with conveying feelings and emotions that a person would deal with in the event of a death. We used a guest speaker who had a family member die and was willing to talk about the circumstances involved. This really impressed the students.
- Never taught.
- The awareness of a recent death of a student's mother made me too cautious in presenting materials.
- It is much easier this year with the Consumer Education Curriculum. When you approach it from a consumer standpoint and then add the human relations element, students are more receptive.

Item 20. Available speakers, information, etc.

(Cont'd) Have not taught.

Students think death is morbid and will never affect them.

Varying laws and procedures in adjoining states.

Students are reluctant to discuss any aspect of death. When I mention a unit on death and dying - they mildly protest.

Haven't taught one yet.

I have not taught a death unit, but we had an FHA meeting on death. I do not feel I have adequate information to teach a unit on death. I have also found the subject on death bothers some students greatly.

Often students are hesitant about becoming involved in this unit.

I have not taught one, due to the fact that I feel I have not been educated enough to teach it.

Dealing with students who have lost a loved one recently during this unit. It's a very sensitive subject. If they open up it's very helpful for everyone.

Some students don't think about it yet and are not interested.

Don't teach this particular subject.

I am too emotional about the subject - I don't think I could remain composed, at least when the subject of a child's death arose. I cry too easily.

Two years in a row, after we covered the unit in class, two students lost their dad with heart attacks. They both said the unit helped them get through it, but I got paranoid and didn't cover it the next year.

Students are surprised that someone would teach a unit on death.

Most students have never even been to a funeral.

Students have some misgivings. They object to a field trip to a funeral home.

If a student recently had a death in the family, I tend to be reluctant to teach it that year.

Religious questions are the only problem.

Finding student interest - it seems far off to many of them.

Suicide - A student's mother had taken her life.

Haven't taught a death education unit.

I have not taught a unit.

Have not taught a unit on death.

Have not taught a unit. Since it is in Consumer Education Curriculum, it will be included this spring.

A 9th grade student does not like to think of such a thing.

I haven't ever taught one.

Do not teach death education.

I talked one day to one class about death. One girl's brother had died and she was uncomfortable. I really don't know enough about it and don't have the materials to teach death. I am interested, though.

None - as I don't teach this unit.

When teaching this unit suicide is brought up a lot and this year I felt uncomfortable about teaching this unit because one of the students did commit suicide at the beginning of the year and the students will not discuss it at all.

- Item 20. I haven't taught a unit on it, but one of our students was
(Cont'd) killed in an accident and it lead to classroom informal discussions. Most of the students were too emotionally involved to discuss death logically.
- Emotions of students.
I haven't taught this unit yet.
I have not encountered many difficulties. The students respond well and the local funeral directors have been very helpful.
The time to work this unit into our busy teaching schedule would be a problem.
I don't attempt it. I don't feel qualified or comfortable with the topic.
None other than finding information.
Adults (parents) were sent letters explaining an overivew of this unit. They were asked to comment as - agree or disagree.
Religious aspects of student backgrounds.
I find that students have a hard time being realistic concerning death.
Finding resource materials to use in the unit.
Some students dislike it and some parents refuse to let students tour a funeral home.
A funeral director came to talk to my family living class one time as a guest speaker to speak about the cost of funerals. The students started staring out the window and gave no feedback whatsoever. I asked them later why, and they said they did not like to talk about funerals and death.
No exposure to it.
None. I have used a guest speaker from a funeral home in our town. Used with family living curriculum.
Students being afraid to discuss.
A student had a death in immediate family while unit was being taught. This was a dramatic experience for the entire class. I foresaw more problems than developed.
I have never taught a unit on this.
When a student experiences a death, the other students do not know how to respond appropriately. This is the main thrust any unit should take. Have students become familiar with the stages of grieving and how to react.
I believe that this issue should be the responsibility of the family and church. We as teachers in the public schools are taking too much responsibility for some subjects. We should not be responsible for everything from driving to death. It's no wonder that parents feel free to shirk their responsibilities when the schools jump in to tackle every task! I am however, interested in the classes for myself.
Students who have lost a relative or close friend recently may cry and become emotionally upset. Some students have shown a great deal of interest in learning how to transact the business dealing with funeral arrangements.
Parents' fears - students are interested.
My advisors board definitely felt it was wrong and a very touchy subject and one which should not have much time spent on. For those students who had recently lost a close friend or relative, it could be very difficult.

Item 20. Seems that someone in the group always has just lost a relative.
(Cont'd)

Teacher Comments and Suggestions

I have taught a small portion of this unit in Family Relations and Child Development classes. The students have reacted in different ways, most of them are interested and felt that this should be taught in high school. I would suggest teaching death education to all high school students.

I think this is a good idea.

Two of my students have lost fathers in the past two years. There was a need for them to work through their grief.

I do not feel death education needs to be taught in the school.

I think this is a good idea, however, I don't feel that I or any other teacher would really be qualified to teach this.

This unit needs to be presented at a time that would not involve emotion too strongly of students.

Perhaps having materials related to teen deaths would be a good way to get their attention.

Would like any resources or list of resources you can supply.

Sounds like a unit of interest to students and adults.

I would like to see such a unit incorporated into one of the State Department Curriculum Guides.

Need a way of presenting this unit without making students depressed or scared, yet they need the information relating to death and cost of death for future use.

Students have been back to tell me that the unit helped them when they actually had to deal with a death.

I feel death education in school is a good idea, I wish I was better informed and prepared to teach it.

I have a student now who's mother is dying of cancer. Two years ago a student's father died of cancer. Both students are/were distraught and under considerable stress and needed help that I feel unprepared to give. Watching a parent die a slow, painful death is probably the worst thing that I've seen a student go through.

Definitely needed. Many deaths have occurred within the last year in our community and students don't know how to take it.

I have no fear of death except by cancer. My mother died in October after fourteen years of fighting the disease. Her dad also died from cancer so my firsthand experiences leave me a little apprehensive - not really a fear, but a nice healthy respect for the disease!

I think death education should be taught or at least introduced during a school year. Many students are not really prepared for all that it can entail.

I feel this subject should be handled on a one-to-one basis. I am not antagonistic to your endeavor - just not ready for it being in this school system.

I would suggest the developed unit be kept short with suggestions on how to lengthen if some teacher wanted to. A short, intensive book would be more easily added to our already crowded curriculum.

I think that it is important for people to learn to deal with death, but high school students don't want to think about it - therefore they would probably just tune out the information. It's too morbid for them. Also, taxpayers don't want things like this taught in schools - they are more concerned with English, math and science.

A local parent who has lost a child can be a great resource in helping teach about coping with death. A field trip to a funeral home is a must!

Thanks for a short easy form!

Worksheet with basics that student could keep would be valuable.

I believe teachers already have enough subject matter to cover and I feel this would best be left to the family and the church.

I am not interested in any materials, as I have compiled my own and feel it meets my needs.

The hospice movement must be included.

I dealt with the subject from the consumer economics view in dealing with funeral arrangements and purchases involved.

At the teenage level, suicide would have to be focused on in a death education unit.

I feel death education would be valuable to students. But, at this point in my life, I don't think I could handle attending or teaching a course. This might explain why some of my answers may seem contradictory.

I'm not sure how the families in the community would accept this being taught.

This is a topic everyone tries to avoid but the interest grows with each day's discussion and teaching. A funeral home director brings a film and talks to my class. Then we visit the funeral home.

I think the subject is "on the minds" of many - but it would be so difficult to foresee trouble spots, especially for students who had recently experienced a death in the family.

Not interested in adding death education into Vocational Home Economics.

I was raised in a funeral home. Father and Grandfather ran a funeral home for over thirty-five years and I grew up around it and worked there.

The problems in high school are similar to colleges - no money. Any help needs to be with as little expense as possible.

Interesting. I wouldn't mind teaching it if I had some materials.

I would definitely be interested in attending a death education class for college credit.

I feel this would be very worthwhile for teachers. I'm pleased that you are taking the time to organize this.

I think psychologists point of view and clinical information of people's fears and thoughts on death and dying would be very important, such as, normal vs. abnormal.

Our schools are already over burdened with laws mandating them to teach unacademic subject matter. I see problems and conflicts with parents' ideas on death, which overlap into the religious realm.

I feel death education would be a hard unit to teach. Personally, I'm not afraid of death and it doesn't bother me because I'm a Christian and I feel life will be even better after death than now. It would be hard to keep my opinions and religious beliefs out of a unit on death if I taught one.

I feel this is a unit that needs to be taught - but moral values may come into this and cause problems if a student has not been brought up under the Church.

I have never had anyone really close to me die. I don't know what it feels like and I don't really know the expense or emotions involved in the death of someone really close.

This is a good topic, but at the present time, we do not teach this subject.

I feel this subject should be discussed when students are interested and bring the topic up - otherwise they will not absorb information unless they feel the need.

I feel this would be a worthwhile unit to teach students.

All things I have done were through FHA chapter meetings, not in the regular classroom. I'm not opposed to it though.

My husband is a funeral director, so I'm sure I look at the information very differently than other home economics educators.

This subject is one of the lessons being discussed in my missionary society's year book. Very interesting subject.

Would like to see material on phases families go through after death.

Please do not let an atheist teach a death and dying course. Families need help coping with death, not someone beating them down!

I have used a funeral director very successfully in a consumer education unit - relating to cost of funerals - students had a lot of questions.

A student was recently killed in an automobile accident here. It was extremely difficult for some to deal with and I almost felt incapable of helping them deal with the situation. The funeral was also held in our gym and that increases its difficulty in that the students (minority of them) had not even attended a funeral before.

Comments of the Templer/McMordie Scale

Item 2 - The thought of death seldom enters my mind.
"Our family business is funeral service."

Item 5 - I am not at all afraid to die.
"I am afraid of the unknown."

Item 6 - I am not particularly afraid of getting cancer.
"I have had cancer."
"I have had 9 major operations."
"I've had cancer surgery."

Item 7 - The thought of death never bothers me.
"I have small children I would leave behind."

Item 11- I am really scared of having a heart attack.
"My dad died with a heart attack at 40, so my 40th year I suffered some trauma."

Item 12- I often think about how short life really is.
"Not often."

Item 13- I shudder when I hear people talking about World War III.
"For my children's sake."

Item 14- The sight of a dead body is horrifying to me.
"I work with my husband daily who is a funeral director."

2

VITA

Kenneth L. Curl

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: ATTITUDES OF VOCATIONAL HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS TOWARD DEATH
WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR INSERVICE EDUCATION

Major Field: Home Economics Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Blackwell, Oklahoma, January 28, 1947,
the son of Oliver and Marguerite Curl.

Education: Graduated from Tonkawa High School, Tonkawa, Oklahoma,
in May, 1965; attended Northern Oklahoma College, Tonkawa,
Oklahoma, 1965-66; received Bachelor of Science degree in
Funeral Service Education from Central State University,
Edmond, Oklahoma, 1969; received Master of Science degree
in Educational Psychology at Oklahoma State University,
1978; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education
degree in Home Economics Education at Oklahoma State
University in December, 1984.

Professional Experience: Licensed Embalmer and Funeral Director
in state of Oklahoma, 1969; associated with Pishny Funeral
Home, Deer Creek, Oklahoma, 1963-69; Guardian Funeral Home,
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1969-75; Assistant Professor,
Funeral Service Education, Central State University, Edmond,
Oklahoma, 1975-84.

Professional Organizations: Phi Delta Kappa; Oklahoma Funeral
Directors Association; National Funeral Directors Association;
Sigma Phi Sigma; Omicron Nu.