

# GRIEF AND MOURNING AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN ELDERS

## AFTER SPOUSAL LOSS

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### ABSTRACT

This grounded theory study explored grief and mourning processes of African American elders during the transition into widowhood. The participants were 9 African American women who had been widowed from 2-10 years. The age range of the widows was 67-98 with a mean age of 79. The couples had been married a range of 38-62 years before the husbands died. All of the husbands had experienced an anticipated death from a progressive physical illness.

Each participant was interviewed twice, except the one participant who was lost to follow up. Data analysis was completed between each interview, using the methods of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). The analysis was verified with the participants to ensure the credibility of findings.

A six phase process model of the transition into widowhood emerged from the data analysis. There were clear distinctions among the phases, but the women could return temporarily to an earlier phase in the process. The core category was “Persevering” with two closely related subcategories of “Weathering the Storm” and “Overcoming Whatever Comes.”

