

# Language Grief: Its Nature and Function at Community Level

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## Introduction

As part of its culture a community will have an identity or "property of being one and the same" (Brennan 1988:7). Identity implies survival and because survival in an unchanged form is not possible it is normal to accept a degree of continuity as a sufficient defining characteristic of a community. A community can for example change its language and still see itself as the same community as many immigrant communities have done. The extinction of a language therefore does not necessarily involve the extinction of a culture or a community (Edwards 1985). Communities can survive a change of language or even several (Brenzinger 1992) but they can also succumb (Day 1985). Continued functioning requires a concept of future if a community is not to fall into disunity and ultimately extinction (Borkenau 1981). The chances of the physical, political, economic and social survival and future development of a community may be considered to be increased by a change of language, which will have major consequences for that community and will be indicated in the state of health of that community.

At community level there is a state of physical health as possessed by the preponderant number of individuals and manifested in life expectancy, infant mortality, suicide, depression, substance addiction and other epidemiological indicators. The presence of significant mental problems has been described as psychopathology or the inability to behave in ways that foster the wellbeing of the individual and ultimately of society (Coon 1986:483). Some of the forms that psychopathological conditions may take concern self-attitude, self-actualisation of potential, the unity of the personality, perceptions of reality, control of the environment and problem solving (Jahoda 1960:32-33). When a large proportion of the members of a community are experiencing these kinds of problems, collective anxiety neuroses can spread by contagion (Kiev, 1973: 418). Though it is possible to speak of a dichotomy of a "well" or a "sick" society, it is more usual to conceptualise a spectrum of health and disease or, as Antonovsky proposes in relation to the question "how come this group has such a relatively low

proportion of people who have broken down?" (1980: 56), a continuum of health ease/disease. When a community engages in aggression, cruelty, destructiveness (including self-destruction), genocide and autogenocide and offensive (as distinct from defensive) war, it is possible to see these aggressive behaviours as collectively pathological.

Depression is a condition of disease which may prevail in a community. In depression there is a sense of inadequacy, despondency, pessimism, sadness and a decrease in activity and reactivity (Reber 1995: 197), which if severe enough can put survival in question. Does language play a role here? The ensemble of factors including language which appear to be essential for community survival have been collectively called "ethno-linguistic vitality" (Giles, Bourhis and Taylor 1977). Although it is fundamental in Oriental medicine (as Chi or Qi) (Lewith, 1982), energy is not a concept in widespread use in Western medicine. Both approaches do however, recognise a fundamental link between physical and mental health and disease. A theory of health maintenance and enhancement or salutogenesis asserts that the key casual factor is a *sense of coherence* or ". . . global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can be reasonably expected" (Antonovsky 1980:123). The sense of coherence concept is, moreover, valid at the group level, be it family, class, neighbourhood, region or country (Antonovsky 1987: 171), with the proviso that there must first be a sense of group consciousness or subjectively identifiable collectivity (Antonovsky, 1987: 175). An individual or group with a highly developed sense of coherence will have a high level of generalised resistance resources which are identified as rationality, flexibility and farsightedness (Antonovsky, 1979:112-113), and it is possible to see language as fundamental to the maintenance of that sense.

## **Survival-enhancing attitudes and behaviours including language maintenance**

Survival is a matter of both attitude and behaviour. In discussing survival in concentration camps, Bettelheim observed that luck was the foremost survival factor and although extremely slim, chances could be increased by the attitudes of courage, decision and conviction, combined with independent behaviour (Bettelheim 1979: 116-117). On the other hand, one could lose the will to survive the unconscious motivation of the wish to bring suffering to an end (327). When confronted by totally overwhelming

destructive forces, a psychoanalytic approach posits that the ego is not seen as worthy of investment with vital energy by the total personality, so that the very limited remaining vital energy will be put at the disposition of the id (Bettelheim 1979: 117). Survival enhancing behaviours would be severely limited under these circumstances. The appropriate attitude for survival is thus one of independence, courage and conviction or a strong desire to maintain the *sense of coherence*. Correct or appropriate behaviour cannot be specified in advance but must be formulated in the light of each situation. It is possible to recognise a number of different responses from a repertoire of actions which can take place in one or more of several spheres such as the political, economic, cultural, environmental and military. The responses may include a selection from the ranges of action/passivity, submission/resistance, low profile/high profile, silence/verbalisation, flight/fight, and non-violence/violence. Any selection of the most appropriate form of action can only be done with an assessment of the strength of the opposing forces, while taking into account the likely effect of losses in producing a state of grief and the effect of further losses, and an assessment of the likelihood of a positive outcome which will engender a healthy emotional state of vitality. A prolonged state of depreciated identity, loss of self-esteem and vision of future can be fatal, and it is in this area that the maintenance of language can play an important role (Fishman 1981).

A community will seek to survive and to maintain its identity but a change of identity may be seen as the price of survival. Although a mother tongue is fundamental to identity, imminent loss of mother tongue and shift to another one is a situation that has confronted many communities, in other words, the prospect of language death. A number of combinations of attitude and behaviour in communities facing the prospect of language loss could be present but generally there are four possibilities of response available on the basis of attitude and behaviour, viz. a community can acquiesce in either a healthy or a pathological way, or it can resist, in either a healthy or a pathological way. After a response through action (or non-action) there will be a modified emotional state, which, if the action has been unsuccessful, or if a loss is imminent, will be one of grief.

The process of recycling of emotions, attitudes and behaviours, particularly at the active, violent, high profile ranges of the behavioural repertoire in the form of the "vicious circle" has often been referred to and appears to be a common characteristic of unresolved situations. "The role of loss . . . (in an individual or community). . . leading to a grief which is dominated by anger, followed by recriminative actions against the perceived aggressor, is a circular process which has psychological and sociological components and is observed in many blood feuds and wars between nations." (Haig 1991: 204).

## Grief including language grief

Though commonly associated with the loss or imminent loss of a loved one, grief or deep or violent sorrow can result from the loss of a limb, a home, an object, a country, political autonomy, a culture, a language or a combination of these producing a state of compound grief. Grief is closely related to health and has been depicted as a mechanism with the function of restoring health after loss. When grief is playing an essential part in the re-establishing of a *sense of coherence* within a radically changed first-loss situation, it can be a positive health-enhancing process. For a collectivity, grief can have a species-survival value (Haig, 1990: 25) and thus grief has a function as an adjustment mechanism at collective level.

Where the process of grief or grief-work has not led to a new health-restored state, it is pathological, abnormal or unresolved (Haig, 1990:107). Unresolved grief does not allow an accommodation but perpetuates stereotyped repetitions and extensive interruptions to healing. Pathological grieving often arises following an unnatural death involving violence such as homicide, suicide or accident (Haig, 1990: 112). The unresolved questions of responsibility and perhaps a burden of guilt can prevent a normal grief process and therefore the restoration of health (Haig, 1990: 107).

An individual will never completely lose his or her mother tongue and it will always remain at the basis of personality and strong feeling of attachment is normal (Weinreich 1953: 99-100). In addition, language plays a fundamental role in creating, operationalising and sustaining the *sense of coherence* and therefore wellbeing of an individual and a community. However, as has already been noted, communities do survive a change of language, whether through compulsion or strategy and often as a matter of physical survival. As with any other type of loss, this will necessarily entail a grief reaction, the type of which will depend on the nature of the loss, with regard to the involvement of violence. Grief concerning language death including localised language or dialect death could take the form of anticipatory grief over a loss that is foreseen and could be allied with another loss such as that of land, autonomy, status or reputation. In the case of a community that has been programmed for destruction, systematic language deprivation will be seen as an integral part of a greater strategy involving also a deliberate disruption of the sense of coherence, identity and every other valued possession. There is suggestive evidence that pervasive and persistent despair kills through a complex psychic and hormonal process which exhausts the cortex of the adrenal glands and probably the ability to

adapt to stress (Chatan 1976 :116) and it can therefore be deduced that despair over the loss of a language may be fatal in consequence. Such communities are unlikely to experience a normal grief reaction. In communities where language is dying through 'natural causes' ie. no violence is involved, a normal grief reaction may be much more readily expected. Normal grief will aid adjustment but abnormal, pathological or unresolved grief and mourning, the expression of grief, has serious consequences for the health and therefore survival of a community, as it does for the individual. It has been asserted that ". . .much psychiatric illness is an expression of pathological mourning." (Bowlby 1979: 53), an observation that could be considered valid at collective level also.

## **Responses to a situation of actual or potential language death**

Communities have displayed a wide variety of attitude and response to the threat to their language. Classifying these according to attitude and behaviour, the following case studies can be observed.

### **Type 1 Attitude: Acceptance/Behaviour: Healthy**

#### **Case (i) The Gaels of Nova Scotia**

It has been argued that language is only one of a number of markers of identity and as such can be dispensed with without significant loss of identity, the Gaels of Nova Scotia being an example (Edwards, 1991). In 1880 the number of Gaelic speakers in Cape Breton Island was close to 88,000. Gaelic became an oral language, there was much out-migration, no provision for Gaelic education, and some persecution of Gaelic in the schools, resulting in a decline such that Gaelic in Cape Breton Island and other parts of Nova Scotia it is now in the gravest danger of extinction (Edwards 1991: 225-227). The Gaelic community have it is reported nonetheless been able to maintain a sense of identity, though in a symbolic rather than linguistic way through such activities as a kilted golf tournament (Edwards 1991: 277).

Although Gaelic in Scotland received negative treatment in earlier times (Dorian, 1981), all evidence appears to indicate that the Gaels of Nova Scotia are a healthy well-adjusted community who have survived the loss of their language without any symptoms of

pathological grief and appear to be fully integrated into the mainstream of anglophone Canadian culture.

### **Case (ii) The Javanese**

Javanese is the indigenous language of the island of Java which has 75 million speakers (Grimes, 1992:587) who are now witnessing the rapid development and expansion of another language, Bahasa Indonesia, as the sole official language of the Indonesian Republic. The resource-rich Indonesian archipelago has seen many dominating foreign powers who imposed their languages: Sanskrit in the Hindu period, Arabic in the Islamic period, Dutch under the Dutch, Japanese during occupation of World War II, and more recently English through modern day tourism and contact with US and transnational English-medium corporations from various countries. Because of the trading significance of the Straits of Malacca and the port of Malacca, Malay became the lingua franca. Malay was also simpler than Javanese which according to Alisjahbana (1966:59) is in fact for foreigners more than one language on account of its various levels of expression according to rank, age or other criteria. During more than 300 years of rule, the Dutch were obliged to use Malay to implement their policies while making variable efforts to introduce Dutch to the indigenous peoples. At the All-Indonesia Youth Congress in 1928 the policy of 'one mother country, one people, one language' was adopted and Malay rather than Javanese was selected as that language on account of its status as lingua franca and language of Islam throughout the Archipelago (Johns 1963:413). Thus after independence in 1949 Malay became Bahasa Indonesia, the national language of a state consisting of 3,000 islands, 250 language communities and today 195 million inhabitants.

The absence of conflict over the downgrading of Javanese could be attributable to the fact that the majority of intellectuals promoting Bahasa Indonesian, including Sukarno, one of the main architects of the revolution, were wholly or partly Javanese in background themselves. In addition, Javanese had not been a language of political dominance for many centuries on account of the long colonial period and the fact that Malay already had a strong position as a national language in neighbouring colonies and countries.

## **Type 2 - Attitude: Acceptance/Behaviour: Pathological**

### **Case Study: The Australian Aborigines**

In February 1988 a national newspaper published an article entitled "A Thousand Yarns Will Follow Ben to the Grave" (Weekend Australian, Feb 6-7, 1988: 3) and went on to describe how when Mr Ben Murray aged about 97 dies, his language of Thirari will go with him to the grave. Soon the other Aboriginal languages of Arabana, Wangangurru and Diyara with only a handful of speakers between them, will follow. Of the original estimated 500 Aboriginal languages only 50 were considered viable in the 1980s (Lo Bianco, 1981:10), a figure confirmed in 1991 (Blake 1991:6), and only 40,000 of a total Aboriginal population of 180,000 stated that they regularly used an Aboriginal language at home (Clyne, 1991: 42-43). Although Aborigines were involved in some instances of resistance against the influx of Europeans, their geographic dispersal, non-violent ecology-valuing culture and lack of political or military structures meant that they were not inclined towards a major war of resistance. However, the profile of mental and physical health statistics indicate the presence of an acute pathological state. Firstly, their total numbers were reduced by three quarters from an estimated 300,000 before the arrival of Europeans to 75,000 in the first 100 years of settlement up to 1888 and then to only 67,000 in 1930, but increasing since then to 180,000. The life expectancy of Aborigines at birth was calculated by a National Population Inquiry to be 50 as compared with the Australian figures of 69.3 for males and 76.3 for females (Rao and Bostock, 1989). Infant mortality, sexually transmitted diseases and leprosy are all many times higher in rate than for the rest of the population. There was sufficient psychiatric disability for one commentator to describe several Aboriginal communities as "sick societies" (Cawte, 1973: 365). Some of the contributing factors have been identified as gross stress, interference with vital strivings, crisis of identity, poverty, disturbance of domesticity and pervasive deprivation (Cawte, 1973: 378), while the manifestations are shortness of longevity, abnormal incidence of suicide, homicide and lack of will to live. These characteristics coincide with the pathology of grief: an unresolved state of emotional disturbance resulting from loss of land, autonomy, culture and language. The lack of a strong language revival movement can be interpreted as symptomatic of a feeling of inequality in the face of the immensely overwhelming power of the Anglo-American language and culture in Australia.

### **Type 3: Attitude: Rejection/Behaviour: Healthy**

#### **Case (i) The Yiddish**

There are today slightly more than 2 million mother-tongue claimants of Yiddish worldwide, with roughly 1 1/2 million in USA, 220,000 in

countries of the former Soviet Union, and 215,000 in Israel (Grimes 1992: 647). While in some respects not meeting the normal definitional requirement of being a community (geographical concentration in a single area), the abundant sense of identity, community spirit and a social structure based on religion, permit the recognition of the Yiddish as a community. In defining Yiddish as the language of the Ashkenazic subculture group of the Jewish people (Weinreich, 1981: 103) it is possible to recognise a single community. The fact that these people lived in ghettos gave some geographical concentration though the precise role of the ghetto is the subject of conjecture (Weinreich, 1981). While Yiddish is probably no longer the main defining characteristic of the Ashkenazic community as a result of the holocaust and the foundation of the state of Israel where Hebrew won in the battle with Yiddish to become official, Yiddish has an undeniably poor state of health. However, it has certainly not expired as "death and ill-health are not the same thing" (Fishman 1985: 211). The death of Yiddish has been long predicted and even proclaimed though in fact has not yet occurred. The grounds for grief over Yiddish are manifest. Among the few remaining traces of human presence found in what had been the ghetto of Lodz were the following words written anonymously in Yiddish

"I dream of being able to tell the world, as much as this is possible, of my suffering. For never before was suffering so collectively shared as it is for us in the ghetto. After all this writing in many languages, I turn again to my own language, to Yiddish, to our graceful mother tongue, because only in Yiddish will I be able to express my true self, directly and not, it is my language, and the language of our fathers and grandfathers, mothers and grandmothers. So I shall love Yiddish, because it is mine."(Anonymous 1944 in Adelson and Lapides 1989: 421)

Considering the history of Yiddish, it is surprising that there is no evidence of pathological language grief among the members of the communities where it is still spoken, but rather a positive attitude of the rejection of death, while the language itself has been claimed to have a "mysterious miraculous elan vital" (Fishman 1985:213). The vital signs of a renewal of Yiddish are increased educational interest and activity in a dozen or more countries but particularly the USA, Canada, France, Holland, Germany and Israel, and also in a Yiddish medium theatre and literature on a very wide front (Fishman 1985:212). This combined with the presence of a group of community leaders who though now old ". . .are blessed with a healthy dose of supernatural and supernational strength which

provides unexpected faith, energy and opportunity" (Fishman, 1981:55) means that the issue of language grief over Yiddish is being resolved.

### **Case (ii) The Irish in the Irish Republic**

Ireland was wholly monolingual in Irish Gaelic (now called Irish) until the 17th century, when English began its march to ascendancy as the dominant language in a process which was greatly hastened by the famine and mass-emigration of the 19th century. In the 1981 census, only some 5,000 persons claimed to be monolingual in Irish, but over a million claimed to be speakers of Irish and English in a total population of 3.3 million (Crystal, 1987: 303,359).

The demise of Irish was carried out according to plan by the colonising power. Political instability, civil disorder and preoccupation with physical survival worked powerfully against Irish and by 1800 the gentry were entirely anglophone in their mother tongue and in most of eastern and central Ireland spoke no Irish at all (Hindley 1990:8). In the 19th Century the process was hastened by schooling in English, the influence of the Catholic Church and above all the Great Famine of 1845 to 1849 in which approximately one million died and the subsequent mass emigration which halved the population by 1900 (Hindley, 1990:13). In the 20th Century support and respect for Irish grew, particularly since the foundation of the Gaelic League in 1893 and with great enthusiasm in the twenty six counties after they became the Irish Free State in 1922. Notwithstanding the respect and reverence with which Irish is held today, Irish is in fact in a state of severe decline. "at the lower extreme of minority language decline. Its official and honoured status is utterly belied by the inability of the great majority of the Irish people to speak it... as well as they do their real native language, which is English." (Hindley 1990:221). However in many ways the Irish people have demonstrated evidence of a healthy response to the decline of their original language. Governments have been elected with a commitment to arresting the decline. The main thrusts of the Irish language policy are firstly in giving Irish status in the Constitution as the "national" and "first official language of the state", secondly in seeking to provide bilingual services in Irish as well as English and thirdly in seeking to expand Irish language capacity through public opinion, education, the arts and the media. These tasks are assigned to a statutory body, the Bord na Gaeilge. In 1989 the Bord had a budget of IR£1,030,000 per annum for 1990-1993 (Bord na Gaeilge, 1989). Ireland is also pursuing this work through the EU funded European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, a body set up

with the aim of promoting the 30 plus autochthonous languages of some 50 million EU inhabitants.

#### **Type 4: Attitude: Rejection/Behaviour: Pathological**

##### **Case (i): The Tamils of Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka has a population of 17.6 million of whom about 75 percent are Sinhala-speaking Buddhist-practicing Sinhalese and 12 percent Tamil-speaking Hindu practicing Tamils, with the rest of the population being Muslim or Christian identifying with either language group. The language proportions are Sinhala 72 percent, Tamil 20.5 percent the remainder being English or other language-speaking (Quid, 1996:1330). While both great religious traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism preach non-violence Sri Lanka has in fact been the theatre of a civil war of a most violent nature in which language seems to be implicated. Settled originally by people from Northern India (the ancestors of the present-day Sinhalese) parts of the island were colonised by the Portuguese and later the Dutch. From 1802 to 1948 the whole island was a British Colony during which time English was introduced and became the official and dominant language. Following various expeditions from Southern India, Tamil communities established themselves and became dominant in the north east over a period of 1,000 years but were also brought in under the British. In the post-independence period Sinhalese majority agitation led to a 1956 declaration of Sinhala as the sole official language of the state. In 1972 in response to protests from Tamils the Sinhalese-dominated government changed the Constitution. Not only did it reaffirm the dominant position of Sinhala but also gave state blessing to Buddhism. (Edwards, 1985:179) In 1958 serious riots erupted between Sinhalese and Tamils over the issue of language rights: the Tamils seeking recognition of their language and a Tamil state under a federal system. After considerable agitation Tamil was given official status in 1977 (as was English in 1983). Economic disparities along community lines continued to widen and major bloodshed occurred. In 1981 a State of Emergency was declared and in 1983 a Civil War began between the Tamil Tigers of Elam (LTTE) and the Sri Lanka State, with various atrocities on both sides. In 1987 an Indo-Lanka Peace Accord was signed under which India would cease to supply the LTTE, in exchange for concessions by the Sri Lankan Government to the Tamils of the North East. In making these concessions it should be noted that the Sri Lankan Government is hard pressed with what is virtually another civil war: that with the Janatha Vilukthi Peramuna (JVP) or People's Liberation Front, an

ultra left-wing Maoist group committed to the overthrow of the Sri Lankan government by violent means, and at present in control of parts of the South West.

While the extreme nature of the violent conflicts has received widespread media coverage, a precise number of casualties is not available. Estimates include 10,000 civilians in the North East from 1987-1990 (United Nations, 1992: 5) and 12,000 disappearances from 1983-1992 (United Nations, 1992: 37) and as a global figure would be in the hundreds of thousands since independence.

Without underestimating the importance of the contribution of economic and political autonomy factors, it is possible to interpret the Sri Lankan/LTTE conflict as a pathological expression of an emotional state of rejection of the view that the Tamil language and culture should be removed from the soil of Sri Lanka. In the words of a writer of Sri Lankan Tamil origin ". . . it was . . . intolerable and unjust that the (Official Languages) Act, in giving voice to the Sinhala masses, should have shut out the Tamils." (Sivanandan, 1990: 215) But it is likely that the violence of the Sinhalese reaction could be related to fear at loss of position of Sinhala: as one commentator stated "The Sinhala language . . . was in danger of extinction - and with it the Sinhala people. Where else in the world was Sinhala spoken but in Ceylon?" (Sivanandan, 1990: 217) Each community can therefore be seen as reacting pathologically to fear of language death, Tamil within Sri Lanka and Sinhalese in an absolute sense.

### **Case (ii): The Irish Catholic minority in Northern Ireland**

The demise of Irish in the whole of Ireland has already been noted under 3(ii). Under the Government of Ireland Act 1920 as amended in 1922 the six counties with Protestant majorities became Northern Ireland and remained part of the United Kingdom but with self-governing status which was used to discriminate against the Catholic minority. In 1968 a Civil Rights march through Protestant areas of Derry/Londonderry marked the beginning of "the troubles", a period of civil unrest and violent confrontation between Provisional IRA and the Unionist Parties. British troops were sent to Northern Ireland in 1969, direct rule from Westminster was established in 1972 and an Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed in 1985. Since 1969 more than 3,000 persons have died violent deaths as a result of the conflict (Quid 1996: 1299). Political behaviour in this situation involving as it does acts of murder, torture and random violence on the part of extremists of both sides, is clearly pathological.

On one level it is a conflict over the control of Northern Ireland by one community at the expense of another which is claimant to the same political unit. However, the fact that the conflict is pathological indicates a deeper level of unresolved grief over language and identity. Unlike the Irish Republic, where language grief is being healed through the positive steps that have been noted, in Northern Ireland it is unresolved and without official acknowledgment. The relegation of Irish language and culture to second class status was long recognised as a problem and the Gaelic League was founded in 1893 to rectify this situation by recreating an "Irish Ireland." When he wrote the following words Gerry Adams, the President of Sinn Fein the political wing of the IRA, gave the strongest possible confirmation of the presence of language grief in Ireland and its importance in the current political struggle "There is no such thing as a neutral language, for language is the means by which culture, the totality of our response to the world we live in, is communicated and for that reason the Irish language had to be destroyed. . . . When the language is lost everything it represents is also lost." (Adams, 1986:138). While recognising the special function of the Irish language, Adams is critical of efforts at revival in the Republic as well as the attitude and behaviour of the Protestants in Northern Ireland.

The theme of the need to resolve language grief is also found in the literature and speeches of the Provisional IRA. In a special section of *An Phoblacht/ Republican News* devoted to the Irish language, the words of Padraig O Maolchraoibhe are approvingly reasserted: "Decolonisation is what we are aiming at. Not any kind of regression to another age but the recovery of our own roots and the ending of the feeling of alienation produced by having in our mouths the language imposed upon us by imperialism." (MacDiarmada, 1993:9). The article then goes on to call for a rejection of not only the English language but also the English cultural values of materialism, individualism and opportunism which are associated in the writer's opinion with use of the English language.

Many Irish nationalists without IRA connections have called for a revival of Irish, and it has been argued by Cosslet Quinn, for example, that linguistic and cultural affinities bridged the sea between Scotland and Ulster and that a common Irish-Scottish Gaelic culture shared by Catholic and other churches existed (Davis 1986: 172). This theme has been taken up by the European Parliamentarian John Hume:

"The Irish language therefore touches in a very intimate way, the sense of identity of many of the people of Northern Ireland. Consciousness of that link- is by no means confined to one section of this community. The Irish language, Irish music, Irish dancing are all part of the cultural inheritance of the people of the North, of all the people who live on this island. It would be a tragedy and a distortion of history if they ever came to be regarded as the badge of one section of the community only." (Breathnach, 1989:3).

This view does not have complete acceptance among the Protestant community many of whom are deeply fearful of abandonment by Britain. Northern Ireland's suffering thus can be interpreted as a pathological state caused by unresolved grief over the loss of language, culture and identity by the Catholics and by an unresolved anticipatory grieving by Protestants for the potential loss of their culture from the island of Ireland, though obviously the survival of their language of English is not in question. The state of unresolved grief on both sides creates a situation in which there is little prospect of an abatement in terrorism (Alexander and O'Day, 1991:1).

## Grief Therapy

". . .rebirth requires a mother and in the case of nationalism this is the mother tongue . . ." (Fishman 1973: 410)

The four combinations of attitude and behaviour are consistent with an emotional state of resolved or unresolved grief, as demonstrated by the case studies. Grief has been recognised as the mechanism by which a community may adjust to loss or potential loss. In the case of language, much will depend upon the circumstances surrounding the loss. Four classes of circumstances can be identified:

1. Our mother (tongue) is dying/has died of natural causes - resolved grief
2. Our mother (tongue) is gravely ill but receiving appropriate treatment - resolved grief
3. Our mother (tongue) was murdered and we have ourselves lost the will to live - unresolved grief (internalised)
4. Our mother (tongue) was murdered and the murderers are still living in our house - unresolved grief (externalised).

In each case the word "tongue" is parenthesised so that the proposition can be read without it such that the full emotional impact can be felt as one

attempts to understand the violence of the political motivations noted in several of the case studies. It must also be acknowledged that against this interpretation it has been stated that the "...whole issue of 'murder or suicide' is muddied, of course, by ideological leanings" (Edwards 1985: 52) but the present (sociology of knowledge) approach is that social constructions of truth including anticipated grief must be seen as valid components if there is to be an explanation (Jackson and Penrose 1993). It can be seen therefore that a community can have its health and even survival affected by circumstances which have been imposed, in particular, through interference, real or imaginary, intended or unintended, with its language.

*Therapy* in individual treatment for grief-related illness involves a programme of counselling combined with possible psychopharmacologic agents (Haig 1990). While the latter are not normally available at community level though it could be hypothesised that widespread substance abuse is an attempt to resolve grief at communal level, community grief therapy would take the same form as that for the individual, namely an attempt to restore vigour, purpose, sense of coherence and sense of future, combined with an attempt to neutralise feelings of guilt. In cases of language grief, appropriate therapy would be language therapy, that is attempting to shift a community from Type 2 or Type 4 to Type 3 or from pathological behaviour to healthy behaviour. In this therapy a shift to Type 1 would not be contemplated as acceptance of the loss would not be something that could be reasonably asked for after a loss involving violence.

A community whose survival is threatened may well find itself locked into a recycling of unresolved grief reaction causing violence against a dominant power and/or itself. Generally the grief of the community in this situation will be a compound grief over loss of land, political autonomy, self-esteem and identity, as well as language. Whilst the recovery of lost land and political autonomy may seem an impossible task, recovery of language and with it self-esteem and identity is not only possible but practicable and feasible. Moreover it is difficult to suppress should a community decide to follow this route to the resolution of its collective grief.