

Grief and Bereavement in the College Setting

An honors thesis for the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development

Kathryn Elise Galasso

Tufts University, 2013

Abstract

This study examines the prevalence and experience of grief that is related to bereavement in the college setting. When it comes to grief work, research shows that college students are understudied and underserved. The goal of the study was to establish prevalence of grief, identify complicating factors that exist in the college setting, and explore support systems and coping methods that this age group utilizes. Through a mixed methods survey, 113 students provided responses based on their experiences with grief while enrolled at a private university in the New England region. Experience was assessed using multiple methods including the participant's responses to open-ended questions; analyses included percentage calculation of response prevalence, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. Results show that the prevalence of grief in college is higher than expected. Family and friends are the most commonly used support systems, and being away from home is the hardest part of grieving in college. Finding time to grieve and balancing a hectic schedule were also listed as complicating factors of grieving in college. Suggestions to aid students who are grieving were made, including: (a) establishing school support for traveling home, (b) developing protocols for professors to follow, and (c) restructuring of mental health services involving outreach campaigns and more availability of resources.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my committee chair, Professor M. Ann Easterbrooks, who provided much guidance, expertise, and support throughout the year. Her knowledge of attachment and the thesis process was invaluable. I would like to thank my committee member, Professor Kerri Modry-Mandell, whose professional knowledge of coping and support for children who are grieving guided much of my work. Both professors allowed me to pursue a novel study that I was passionate about, and I am so thankful for their encouragement and assistance. I also extend my gratitude to those students who participated in this study: without their input this work would not have been possible.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1

Literature Review.....2

 Attachment Theory.....2

 Attachment Theory and Bereavement.....6

 Grief and Complications.....10

 Coping Strategies.....14

 Emerging Adulthood.....19

 Grief as an Emerging Adult.....23

 Prevalence of Grief in College.....24

 Effects of Grief during the College Years.....25

 The College Setting.....27

 Coping with Grief in College.....28

 The Present Study.....29

Methods.....30

 Participants.....30

 Procedures.....30

Results.....31

 Demographics of Participants.....31

 Prevalence of Grief.....32

 Relationship to the Deceased.....32

 Leave of Absence from Campus.....33

 Sources of Support.....34

Aspects of College Life that Affect Grief.....	36
Length of Grief.....	37
Other Information.....	38
Interactions.....	40
Discussion.....	43
Reflections on Attachment Theory.....	43
Effects of the College Environment.....	45
Support Systems.....	46
Suggestions for College Campuses.....	47
Limitations of the Study.....	50
Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Work.....	52
References.....	54
Appendix A.....	58
Appendix B.....	59
Appendix C.....	60
Appendix D.....	61

Introduction

Grief is a phenomenon that can affect anyone at any stage in his or her life. There are many causes of grief, and bereavement may be one of the most studied. There are many different sources on how the death of a friend, family member, or other connection can have a profound effect on the surviving individual. However, most of the literature only looks at the effects of the grief on adults and children. Support systems and coping methods are discussed within these age confines as well. There is almost no literature on those who find themselves between childhood and adulthood (Balk, 1997). Recent work on a new stage termed “emerging adulthood” explains how, for individuals aged 18 to 25 years of age, the experiences of this group are unique and do not equate to those of childhood or adulthood (Arnett, 200). This age range is often when individuals are in college, another setting that is a unique period in life.

With little research on grief related to bereavement in this age range, it is hard to quantify what the effects of grief are on this population. There are many responsibilities and goals set for students who are in college, and grief can hinder and obstruct the student as they try to meet these goals (Balk, 2001; Michael & Synder, 2005). It is also difficult to find recommendations for coping that are tailored to this age group. Grief can be an all consuming process, and trying to treat the problem with tools that are not suited for the individual can only complicate the grief process. It is important to determine the components of this age group and setting that make grieving difficult and establish what the grief experience is like in order to develop coping strategies that will apply to these unique scenarios.

For the purposes of combating the “various and sometimes ambiguous” definitions of grief and bereavement found in scholarly writing (Attig, 1996, p. 8), the following definitions will be used for the duration of this study. Bereavement refers to the death and any events

surrounding it. Anyone identified as a bereaved individual is a living person grieving the loss of the deceased person. Grief and mourning refer the emotions experienced in the aftermath of a death and the process of coming to terms with the loss.

Literature Review

Since there is little work available that is specific to grief related to bereavement in the college setting, this literature review takes a wide look at all aspects that contribute to this unique scenario. First, attachment theory is discussed, since it a theory of bereavement response that is most concerned with the making and breaking of connections between individuals. Then general views of grief and coping strategies are given based on adult and childhood grief work. A closer look at the theory of emerging adulthood is presented. This is followed by an exploration of the college setting and its unique factors. These then are discussed within the confines of grief and bereavement, which will set the stage for the place of the present study within the current body of work.

Attachment Theory

There are many theories that seek to explain what happens to someone after the death of a loved one. Perhaps the most famous is Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief, outlined in her seminal work: *On Death and Dying* (1969). This model suggests that a bereaved individual passes through five stages of grief, which include: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. John Bowlby's attachment theory is another popular framework, which focuses on the origins of grief and the effects of the relationships between the bereaved and the deceased. Attachment theory will be the main framework used for analysis within this study. Since attachment theory is focused on the nature of connections between people and bereavement is a

breaking and loss of that connection, I believe this theory is the most fitting to analyze the experience of grief.

John Bowlby was a British psychologist who set out to explore the nature of the child's tie to their mother. He developed this theory by drawing from ethology, cybernetics, information processing, developmental psychology, and psychoanalysis (Bretherton, 1992). Through his research with mothers and their young children, Bowlby determined that it is essential for a child to develop a relationship with at least one caregiver in order to develop normally. This relationship is based on security and comfort, not the provision of sustenance as other previous theories had hypothesized. The main function of attachment behavior is the protection and safety of the child (Bowlby, 1969, p. 224).

Bowlby also makes it clear that though the mother is often seen as an infant's primary attachment figure, an infant can become attached to any adult who is their primary caregiver. Infants can also "...become attached to others of the same age, or only a little older, [which] makes it plain that attachment behavior can develop and be directed towards a figure who has done nothing to meet the infant's physiological needs. The same is true even when the attachment-figure is a grown-up" (1969, p. 217).

Bowlby outlines the characteristics of attachment theory in his important work, *Attachment and Loss*, a three-volume product published over the course of 11 years (from 1969 to 1980). Each volume deals with a specific aspect of the theory: the first, *Attachment*, focuses on the main points of his theory; the second, *Separation: Anxiety and Anger*, concentrates on what happens when a child is separated from their attachment figure; and the third, *Loss: Sadness and Depression*, explains the reaction to the death and/or complete loss of an attachment figure. In the first volume, Bowlby elucidates on the nature of attachment theory and the feelings

that an attachment bring. He claims: “No form of behavior is accompanied by stronger feeling than is attachment behavior. The figures toward whom it is directed are loved and their advent is greeted with joy” (1969, p. 209).

Mary Ainsworth, an American developmental psychologist, expanded on Bowlby’s work by explaining that there are different expressions of attachment relationships affected by factors such as the child’s disposition and the parenting style they are exposed to. Each attachment pattern manifests with different interactions between the child and their attachment figure. She concluded that there were different attachment behaviors based on her work through an experiment termed the Strange Situation Protocol (1978). In this experiment, a child and their mother were separated and reunited multiple times with the mother’s behavior being dictated by the research team. The behavior of the child was observed to see how their reactions and attachment behaviors were related. This study led Ainsworth and her team to determine that there were three unique types of attachment: secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent (1978). In 1986, Mary Main and other researchers determined that there was a fourth attachment pattern that they called disorganized attachment. Attachment patterns affect not only the relationship between the child and their attachment figure, but also how the child deals with stress (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
Types of Attachment

Quality of caregiving		Strategy to deal with distress		Type of attachment	
Sensitive	Loving	→	Organized	→	Secure
Insensitive	Rejecting	→	Organized	→	Insecure-avoidant
Insensitive	Inconsistent	→	Organized	→	Insecure-resistant
Atypical	Atypical	→	Disorganized	→	Insecure-disorganized

Note. From “Infant-parent attachment: Definition, types, antecedents, measurement and outcome” by D. Benoit, 2004, *Paediatrics and Child Health*, 9(8), p. 542.

As a child grows and develops, their attachment behavior begins to change. Bowlby notes that after a child’s third birthday, displays of their attachment behavior became less urgent and

frequent (1969, p. 261). This decrease in attachment behavior continues for years, but it is important to note that the behavior never disappears completely. The change after three years of age occurs as children “become increasingly able in a strange place to feel secure with subordinate attachment figures, for example a relative or even a school teacher” (p. 205). This shift also allows children to view adults and peers other than their primary caregivers as individuals worthy of an attachment relationship. This change continues through adolescence.

During adolescence a child’s attachment to his parents changes. Other adults may come to assume an importance equal to or greater than that of the parents, and sexual attraction to age-mates begins to extend the picture. As a result individual variation, already great, becomes even greater. At one extreme are adolescents who cut themselves off from parents; at the other are those who remain intensely attached and are unable or unwilling to direct their attachment behavior to others; between the extremes lie the great majority of adolescents whose attachment to parents persists but whose ties to others are of much importance also. For most individuals the bond to parents continues into adult life and affects behavior in countless ways (p. 207).

In old age, attachment behavior continues to shift. Since it is likely that members of the parent generation have passed away, the elderly can shift their attachment to members of their own, or younger, generations (p. 207).

The establishment and maintenance of an attachment relationship is crucial for the well being of any child. The effect of a positive relationship on a child is advantageous, while a negative relationship can be disastrous for a child’s development. The emotions that attachment can elicit also cover a wide range. Bowlby explains, “So long as a child is in the unchallenged presence of a principal attachment-figure, or within easy reach, he feels secure. A threat of loss creates anxiety, and actual loss sorrow; both, moreover, are likely to arouse anger” (1969, p. 209). In fact, when an attachment figure is lost via bereavement, sorrow and anger are just the beginning of the emotional journey for the bereaved individual.

Attachment Theory and Bereavement

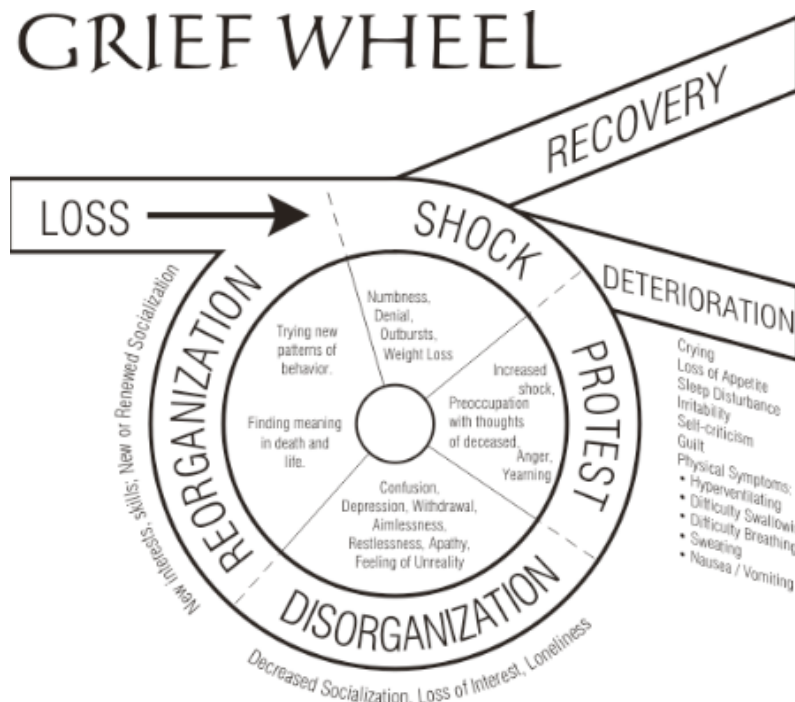
In the third volume of his *Attachment and Loss* series, Bowlby describes what happens when an attachment is lost, especially via death. The 1940s was the first time that clinicians began to pay attention to and analyze the “intense distress and emotional disturbance that immediately follow[s] the experience of loss” (Bowlby, 1980, p. 7). These early analyses have grown into what today is known as grief studies. Bowlby’s grief studies focus on the breaking of an attachment between the deceased and the bereaved. In keeping with reactionary attachment behavior to a lost bond, Bowlby notes “...protest, despair, and detachment is a sequence that, in one variant or another, is characteristic of all forms of mourning” (1979, p. 49).

Bowlby’s model of grief identifies four stages that a bereaved individual will go through (see Figure 1). First, there is shock and numbness characterized by a stunned reaction to the loss and difficulty concentrating which can last from a few hours to a week. The next stage is yearning and searching, marked by longing for the deceased, which can last for months if not years. This is followed by disorientation and disorganization, a phase characterized by depression and acceptance of the reality of death. The final stage is reorganization and resolution, where the individual emerges from their depression and contextualizes their life without the presence of the deceased (Bowlby, 1980).

According to Bowlby (1980), the reorganization mentioned above is the desired psychological outcome after the loss of an attachment figure. This reorganization requires two psychological tasks. The first is accepting the death and finding ways to return to daily activities and create new bonds. The second is finding a way to maintain a symbolic attachment to the deceased and integrate the lost attachment with their life moving forward.

FIGURE 1

Stages of Grief According to Bowlby



Note. From: www.gbcbmk.org.

Within attachment theory, the most intense emotions occur during the formation and breaking of attachment relationships. The goal of attachment behavior is to create and maintain an affectionate bond, so any situation that could be seen as threatening to that bond can elicit behaviors that will attempt to prevent that loss. According to Bowlby, this activates powerful forms of attachment behavior such as clinging, crying, and even anger (1980, p. 42). This protest is the embodiment of acute physiological and emotional distress. This behavior is most commonly expressed at the beginning of bereavement, but can reappear at any time in the grief process. As grief continues, and the effort to restore the attachment bond has not been successful, grief behaviors lessen. While many would assume that these behaviors would eventually cease, Bowlby asserts that the effort to restore the bond still exists; it is just spread over longer and longer time intervals (p. 42). This means that the attachment behavior remains constantly primed,

waiting to be activated by some condition or sign. If not addressed through some active form of grief work, this can result in chronic stress.

Bowlby also explains that there are many conditions that can affect the course of mourning (1980, p. 172) (see Table 2). The main factor is the identity and role of the person lost. Clearly, Bowlby would focus on the loss of attachment relationships and primary caregivers, but he acknowledges that the strength of the bond between two people, regardless if it is an attachment relationship or not, contributes to the course of mourning. Especially in the cases of disordered mourning and complicated grief, the relationships that are being grieved tend to be exceptionally close (p. 176).

TABLE 2

Factors that Complicate Grief

1	Identity and Role of Person Bereaved
2	Age and Sex of the Individual who is Grieving
3	Cause and Circumstances of Loss
4	Social and Psychological Setting of Individual who is Grieving
5	Personality of Individual who is Grieving

Other conditions that play a part are the age and sex of the person bereaved. Bowlby claims that there is “little doubt that there are more women who succumb to disordered mourning than there are men; but...we cannot be sure that women are more vulnerable (1980, p. 170).

Bowlby also explains that disordered mourning could take different forms in the two sexes, so it is hard to observe which sex is more prone to complicated grief.

The age of the bereaved also plays a large part in how the person experiences grief. Bowlby emphasizes the importance of how children have a hard time understanding the true meaning of loss that a death signifies, since even adults have difficulties understanding that someone near to them has died and will not return (1979, p. 91). Bowlby explains how adults are more likely to be given timely and detailed updates about the death, while children are entirely dependent on an adult for their information. Adults are also able to seek help for themselves when their grief is too much to handle on their own, whereas children require someone to intervene on their behalf and may be unable to voice their needs for outside help. Bowlby also makes it clear that displays of attachment behavior in adult life should not be taken as a sign of pathology or regression to immature behavior (p. 41). Attachments are active through all phases of life as long as proximity is kept with attachment figures.

The cause and circumstances of the loss are other conditions that can complicate grief. The cause of a loss and the circumstances in which it occurs are enormously variable and both have a clear impact on the grief that follows them. Bowlby lists several factors surrounding the bereavement that can contribute to more disordered mourning. Whether the death requires a prolonged period of nursing prior to their passing, the death results in distortion or mutilation of the body, how the bereaved receives information about the passing, and/or if anyone can be seen as responsible for the death can all have an effect on mourning (1980, p. 181). These are just some factors that can contribute to complicated grief circumstances.

The social and psychological circumstances that individuals who have been bereaved find themselves in also contribute to their grief. This refers to the support system that they have available and their mental state before the death occurred. Living arrangements are one facet of this: do they live alone which keeps them isolated from others? Are they responsible for caring

for a child while they grieve? There are many different environments that the bereaved can find themselves in which can help or hinder their grief process. Socio-economic provisions and opportunities also dictate what resources the bereaved has at their disposal to help them with their grief. Bowlby also lists religious beliefs and practices as a factor that can facilitate or impede healthy mourning depending on the cultural beliefs of the individual or the people making up their support system (1980, p. 188).

Finally, Bowlby lists the personality of the bereaved as a contributing factor, since it determines their capabilities for making new relationships that will help them deal with stressful situations, where the lost attachment relationship would have normally been the support system. In Bowlby's opinion, it is extremely important to have one person whom the bereaved can go to for support and that they can rely on for comfort and compassion (1980, p. 290). Maintaining and growing social connections in the wake of bereavement can also give the person who is grieving hope for the future that new bonds can be made.

Grief and Complications

Attachment theory's view of grief and bereavement is just one way of looking at these emotions. Many theorists have attempted to define normal grief, yet it is hard to find a definition that is universally agreed upon. However, there are many scholarly articles that explain variants of grief, such as acute, disordered, or complicated mourning. Yet even in these works, it is difficult to find an explanation of basic grief from which these irregular types deviate. The lack of a central definition of grief stems from the fact that grief and mourning take a different path for every individual experience. There are many factors that affect grief that both internal and external to the bereaved individual, such as gender, age, culture, support systems, and more. The

following is a compilation of certain researchers views on grief, in an effort to establish a basic view of the process and emotion.

The Institute of Medicine lists three basic requirements that must be met in order for grief to occur. These are a comprehension of the concept of death, the capacity to form a true attachment, and a mental representation of the attachment figure (1984). When these criteria have been met, an individual is capable of contextualizing the death and recognizing that grief is an appropriate response.

The idea that grief varies between people is complicated by the fact that grief also varies within each individual. Rosenblatt views grief as “an amalgam of differing feeling/thought blends, with the amalgam different for different bereaved persons and different losses, and with the amalgam changing from time to time for any specific person bereaved for a specific loss” (1996, p. 45). This high variation within each individual contributes to the challenge of creating one central definition for grief. Colin Murray Parkes, a psychiatrist who collaborated with Bowlby on bereavement research, echoes this sentiment by explaining, “part of the difficulty [of grief work] lay in the lack of an accepted definition of grief, a problem that still exists today” (2006, p. 29).

Parkes suggested definition of grief includes anger, self-reproaches, and depression as parts of grief that accompany a wide variety of stressful events. He adds that grief specific to bereavement also includes threats to security, major changes in life and family dynamics, traumatic memories of the passing or learning of the passing, blame towards others for the death, and shame and guilt relative to one’s one neglect of the deceased prior to the death (2006, p. 30). Attig describes grief as a coping response that requires the bereaved individual to complete certain tasks in response to the disruption that death creates. He states:

As we grieve and mourn, we address our new life situation, come to terms with the absence of the one who has died, deal with our anguish, pick up the pieces of our shattered lives, and move into the next chapters of our biographies which are indelibly colored by our bereavement (1996, p. 8).

These aspects of grief show how intricate the process can be. Grief is a multifaceted emotion, and when the grief is related to the death of a loved one it is comprised of complicated and complex components that a bereaved individual must address.

On its own, grief presents many challenges for the bereaved individual. Combined with both intra- and inter-personal factors, grief becomes even more difficult. The mourner's psychological circumstances play a large part in the grief process. Parkes identifies the personal vulnerability of the individual who is mourning as a risk factor for complicated grief (2006, p. 27). He also calls the relationship with the deceased person into question – was it extremely close or strained? The nature of a relationship dictates not only how severely a loss is felt, but also adds an aspect that can contribute to guilt or shame felt on behalf of the bereaved individual.

In the same vein, the attachment pattern that the person who is mourning expresses can also have an effect on grief. Parkes examines the four types of attachment patterns and their outcomes for grief and bereavement in adult life. Through his work, he found that securely attached individuals feel less intense distress than those with insecure relationships. This is credited to “a reflection of a more positive view of self and of other people with a...greater willingness to turn to others for support at times of stress” (Parkes, 2006, p. 75). People with an anxious/ambivalent attachment pattern are more likely to suffer severe and lasting grief and loneliness after bereavement due to “very conflicted relationships in adult life” (p. 88). Those who express avoidant attachments in early life may also have a more difficult time grieving since they may “find it difficult to accept love or seek support” (p. 104). Finally, individuals who

display disorganized attachment may not have well-developed coping methods, and in turn can “feel helplessness and tend to turn in on themselves in the face of stress” (p. 120).

Other psychological issues that can affect grief relate to denial or simply not knowing how to go about getting help. Grief that is avoided or ignored by the individual has the possibility of becoming complicated or chronic. Postponing or delaying the start of grief work can also have negative effects on the person who is grieving (Leick & Davidsen-Nielsen, 1991, p. 26).

There are many interpersonal issues that affect grief as well. Rosenblatt explains that for many individuals, there is never a time when they are able to completely stop grieving (1996). Thus, the expectation that those grieving major losses can and should be able to conclude grief can be detrimental to the grief process. Rosenblatt claims that family and community pressure to “be over grief may be based on many false assumptions...some people may not realize that attachments endure and that some losses are so big and painful that one cannot ever get to a place where grief has ended” (1996, p. 50). The pressures felt to conclude grieving quickly not only place undue pressure on the person who is grieving, but also expect them to achieve a goal that is often not attainable.

Parkes agrees that social support is a major factor in determining the grief experience, and also asserts that the events and circumstances leading to the death are another outside force that can have an effect (2006, p. 27). Leick and Davidsen-Nielsen identify that:

People who are unable to use their network, or have no network, are at risk when grief strikes them. If someone has nobody to share their thoughts and feelings with, they become anxious and ashamed. If someone does not feel that they have family or friends who understand them, they are threatened with pathological grief (1991, p. 75).

This utilization of isolation in grief work poses a paradox, however. Leick and Davidsen-Nielsen also acknowledge that there is often a dislike of “breaking down” in front of others, so grief work often requires isolation to express more intense emotions (1991, p. 79). Based on this assertion, it is important that grief work utilizes both support networks and individual efforts according to what the person who is grieving needs most to help them through the grief process. This individualized nature of grief leads to the process of developing coping strategies that attempt to address the needs of many different people who are experiencing grief.

Coping Strategies

Since grief is unique to each person, there is no one method that can be used to cope with the feelings and experiences that accompany the loss of a loved one. Grief work can be done alone, but researchers acknowledge that a combination of personal and assisted grief work usually lead to the best outcome for people who are mourning. Despite differences between each bereaved individual, there are some basics of grief work and coping strategies that researchers propose as rudimentary frameworks that can be fine-tuned to address individual situations.

It is first important to understand why individuals seek help with grief. Attig (1996, p. 9) explains that there are many motivations for asking for assistance from family, friends, professionals, and other sources. One reason is because people who are grieving need help gaining a general understanding of the grief process. For those who have never experienced bereavement before, grief related to the event is new and confusing. Having someone explain what to expect and provide methods for navigating the feelings that come along with the experience can be extremely helpful. Another reason people who are grieving reach out to others is to ask for assistance dealing with the helplessness they may be experiencing. The feeling of not being in control of circumstances or emotions in the wake of bereavement is common, and

sometimes people who are grieving need outside sources to support them while they regain control. Parkes also notes that securely attached individuals are more likely than others to reach out for help when they need it (2006, p. 183). This is important for care providers to note, since it implies that others with different attachment patterns may not reach out for help when they require it the most.

For those who are providing support, there are significant points that they should know before helping individuals through their grief. Bowlby stresses that those in the friend or therapist role should strive to be seen as companions and supporters. He also states that they need to be prepared to explore the “hopes and wishes and dim unlikely possibilities that [the griever] still cherishes, together with all the regrets and the reproaches and the disappointments that afflict him” (1979, p. 94). This addresses the need of grief work to delve deep into the feelings and emotions of the bereaved in order to fully explore the trauma that has happened and begin the road to healing.

Parkes asserts that the most important thing for therapists and others who provide support is to know that grief does not exist in a vacuum and cannot be viewed as the aftereffect of a single event. Previous bereavements (or lack thereof), and attachment patterns can have serious effects on grief:

Bereavement in adult life reflects and, to some extent, repeats the experience of earlier losses gives rise to grief, both for the person lost and for the earlier losses. Early experience of loss can teach the child to cope with losses and thereby prepare them for such losses later in life. On the other hand, those who are insecure in their attachments may become sensitized to the effects of their later losses and at greater risk of problematic bereavements (Parkes, 2006, p. 135).

Based on this, Parkes states that the task of the therapist then becomes finding a way to give the person who is grieving a sense of security. This is needed to begin the positive learning

experience than can accompany grief work, which has not yet occurred for the person who is grieving. Parkes explains that by evaluating circumstances and exploring the effects of recent and past losses, the person who is grieving may be able to gain new insight that can lead to successful grief work (p. 135). Thus, therapists should be prepared to address not only the current loss, but also traumatic events from the griever's past that may relate to the feelings they are currently experiencing.

The next important task for people who are grieving and their support providers is to define what the goals of grief work are. Every person who is grieving will have his or her own unique goals and targets for their grief work, as is the individualized nature of mourning. However, researchers suggest that there are some general goals that all interventions should attempt to achieve.

Barnard, Morland, and Nagy outline three important goals for grief-related interventions (1999). The first is to increase self-efficacy, enabling the person who is grieving to explain their experience surrounding the death and their subsequent emotions. The second goal is to improve self-esteem, since this will empower the person who is grieving to explore the social and physical risks that accompany their grief safely. The third goal is to lead the bereaved individual to a state of self-support, which allows them to find ways to work on their grief using their internal coping mechanisms. When these three goals have been met, Barnard, Morland, and Nagy believe that the person who is grieving will be able to have a "successful presence in their community and create a satisfying social life" (p. 69).

Way and Bremmer (2010, p. 69) also acknowledge key tasks that grief work should aim to address. Way and Bremmer's model address the grief of an individual with a holistic approach and stress the inclusion of the griever's family. The first task is for the family to accept the

reality of the death and acknowledge what the experience of the loss means for them as a whole. This can look different depending on if the deceased was a family member or someone that was close with only one or some of the family. However, for the family to remain a supportive, cohesive unit, it is important that the entire family conceptualizes what the loss means for them. The second task for the family is more specific to the loss of a family member and involves a reorganization of the family system. This allows the family a way to restructure relationships in the wake of a lost bond and a reinvestment of focus in the relationships that remain.

When it comes to the actual content of grief work, people who are mourning have many options. There are psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists, social workers, support groups, family, friends and many other sources of support. According to Ross, the flow of grief work and bereavement services has been highly influenced by Bowlby's overlapping stages of grief and the way that people who are grieving progress through these phases (2010, p. 19). Based on the phase that the person who is mourning is in, interventions can entail personal, one-on-one, or group work.

Barnard, Morland, and Nagy set a list of activities that can be included in grief work (1999, p. 10). They tout uncritical listening as one of the most important aspects of work, since an accepting environment is crucial for the person who is grieving to be able to express their emotions without fear of being judged. They also stress the need for the person who is grieving to be able to engage in some sort of action or activity through which they can channel their feelings. This can be achieved through personal journaling, discussions with a therapist figure, sharing in the setting of a supportive peer group, or other expressive forms. Barnard, Morland, and Nagy also emphasize that people who are grieving should be cognizant that professionals are

only available during certain time periods, so it is important that friends and family provide as supportive of an environment as they can when these workers are not available.

Depending on the stage in life, there are also different recommendations for how group and social work focusing on grief should be conducted. The trend found in most literature is that the site of social interventions for adults is within their social network. McCarthy calls for the importance of seeking peer support from those who understand the grief process. She explains that the quality of the peer group is significant, since social contexts provide critical clues about how to understand and manage life events (2010, p. 30). When dealing with the death of a loved one, adults rely on personal networks for support, but also for clues about how to act. The ties between friends, peers, and family relations have the power to shape the griever's experience with bereavement. Supportive friends can be extremely helpful, but dismissive or impatient friends can have a lasting effect on a griever's current and future experiences with bereavement.

For children, it would seem that a logical place for social-based interventions would be within the school, but there are few programs designed to address this need. Rowling explains that schools should be the obvious choice for a socially based intervention for children who are grieving since they are not just a place of education, but also "a significant social context of their lives" (2010, p. 147). Rowling proposes a school-based program with a holistic approach to loss by incorporating it into the "hidden curriculum or the ethos of the school" (p. 151). This includes creating policies that provide for the emotional well being of students and establishing procedures for referring students to outside agencies. This helps to address earlier concerns raised by Bowlby regarding the lack of ability that young children have to seek help for themselves. By ensuring that responsible adults are monitoring children who are grieving for warning signs, parents and teachers can work together to help young children who are grieving.

Rowling also calls for school-based counseling or grief support programs for students. The main goal of this program would be to help students define the reality of their loss, express feelings associated with loss, gain access to support and information, and integrate the experience into the larger context of their lives. Rowling calls for a dialogue with young students as well, claiming that is the only way to truly gauge what specific interventions children require on school campuses.

There is much literature concerning bereavement support for adults and young children, from where grief work should take place to who should be involved in the process. The distinction between the two groups makes it clear that age and stage play an important role in tailoring grief work to emotional and intellectual development. What, then, can be done for individuals who fall in between these two age groups?

Emerging Adulthood

First proposed by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett in 2000, emerging adulthood is defined as “the period from the late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18 – 25” (Arnett, 2000, p. 469). In industrialized countries, profound change happens between the late teen and early twenty years. Tanner and Arnett realized that in countries such as the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, something was changing for people entering this age range in the 1980s and 1990s (2011). “In prior decades, the twenties were relatively predictable: young people finished their education, moved out of their parents’ household, got married, and had their first children all in a short period of time, usually by about age 25” (Tanner & Arnett, 2010, p. 13).

Participation in higher education has risen steadily over the last few decades. Now over half of young people enter postsecondary education after high school and in nearly every country women obtain more education than men (Tanner & Arnett, 2011, p. 14). People are getting

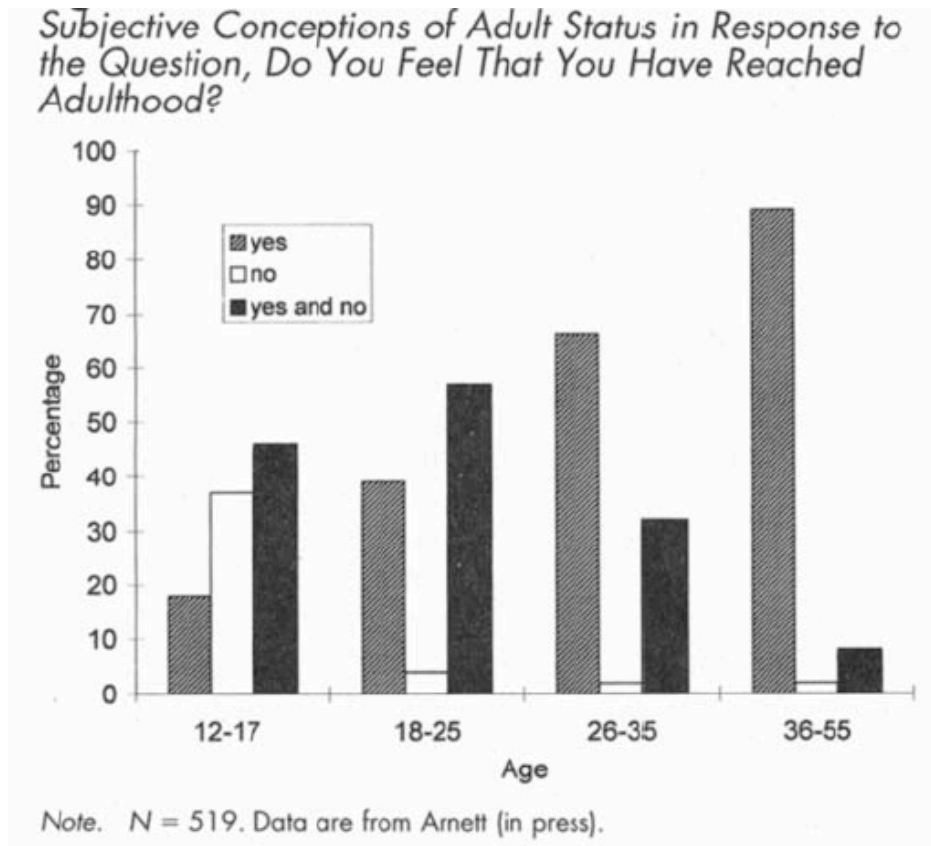
married later as well, with the median age of marriage now at nearly 30 years old in industrialized countries. The result is that these emerging adults are waiting longer to enter “traditional” adulthood and are exhibiting behavior of being somewhere between child and adult behaviors and mentalities. The new nature of change and growth during the late teens and early twenties is exciting, but it can also be “the cause of anxiety and uncertainty, because the lives of young people are so unsettled, and many of them have no idea where their explorations will lead” (Arnett, 2004, p. 3). Amidst the freedom of making new decisions is the ambiguity that comes with unexplored territory.

It is important to note that emerging adulthood is not a universal period for human development. Arnett’s research showed that this state only exists in certain conditions that have come about recently in select societies and cultures that are generally limited to industrialized nations. The existence of emerging adulthood also requires a society that permits individuals a “moratorium” of sorts in the late teens and early twenties by not expecting them to take on adult responsibilities. This allows this age range to assume responsibilities at their own pace and in stages, creating this new emerging adulthood phase (Arnett, 2004, p. 7).

Many would argue that emerging adulthood is simply an extended adolescence or a young adulthood. However, Arnett asserts that there are pronounced differences between these stages (2004, p. 4). Emerging adults have much more freedom from parental control and are able to explore more independently than teenagers. They also have not made the transitions historically associated with becoming an adult, such as marriage and parenthood, or the met three criteria established by Arnett: “1. Accept responsibility for yourself, 2. Make independent decisions, and 3. Become financially independent” (2004, p. 15). When polled by Arnett, a vast

majority of individuals in the 18 – 25 year range felt they had not yet completely reached adulthood (See Figure 2).

FIGURE 2



Note. From “Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties” by J.J. Arnett, 2000, *American Psychologist*, 55(5), p. 472.

There are five main features of emerging adulthood, as noted by Arnett (2004). The first important feature is that an individual is taking the time to explore their own identity and trying out different formations to see what fits them best. These identity questions are typically posed in the fields of love and work, which are the main foci as emerging adults move towards adulthood (p. 8). This introspection leads emerging adulthood to also be the most self-focused age of life, as well as an age of great instability. Due to the transitions in work, school, location, and relationship status, emerging adulthood is also the age of feeling in-between and neither

adolescent nor adult. Despite all of this upheaval and transformation, it is also the age of possibility, “where hopes flourish, [and] when people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives” (Arnett, 2004, p. 8).

Identity formation is perhaps the biggest hallmark of emerging adulthood. According to Erikson, identity and role confusion is the central crisis of adolescent life. However, Erikson also made note of a “prolonged adolescence” endemic to industrialized societies where adolescents were allowed to spend time exploring their identity, much like emerging adulthood. He noted: “This period can be viewed as a psychosocial moratorium during which the young adult through free role experimentation may find a niche in some section of his society” (Erikson, 1968, p. 150). This early theoretical basis lends itself well to the current ideology of emerging adulthood.

Relationships with family and friends also change during emerging adulthood. In adolescence, relationships between parents and child can be strained and tense. During the course of emerging adulthood, however, many people begin to see their parents in a more “sympathetic and benevolent light, as persons and not merely as parents” (Arnett, 2004, p. 47). Many emerging adults are surprised to discover the intensity of the attachment they have to their parents. This attachment was dormant while living at home, but once they move away for college or a job, emerging adults begin to realize how much their parents and family mean to them (p. 51). This reawakening of attachment allows parents and children to begin a new chapter in their relationship, marked by more openness and a sense of mutual respect. This shift allows both children and parents to relate to each other as adults, friends, and even near equals (p. 58).

Relationships with friends also become strengthened during this time. In the absence of the immediate physical presence of family, emerging adults seek friends as their new confidants and companions. During this period, some friendships can even exceed family relationships in

importance (Tanner & Arnett, 2011, p. 26). As friends share their struggles and triumphs in the transitioning world of emerging adulthood, the bond they share is strengthened and reaffirmed in their mutual experience.

With all of the growing and changing that occurs during emerging adulthood, it should be no surprise that there are unique aspects of mental health in this stage. In fact, a distinctive feature of emerging adulthood is a high rate of psychopathology. According to Tanner and Arnett, those in the age range of 18 – 25 years experience more psychiatric disorders in one year than those in any other adult age group (2011, p. 18). Negative affect is also at its highest in the twenties compared to later adult years, and depressive symptoms are higher in this age group than all other adults ages, except for those in their eighties. This tendency towards negative feelings and mentalities no doubt plays a part in emerging adults having unique needs when it comes to bereavement and the grief that follows.

Grief as an Emerging Adult

Grief work with emerging adults is scarcely addressed, and only recently have researchers begun to publish work concerning this population. Of the work available, most focus specifically on emerging adults in college. According to Mathews and Servaty-Seib, college students exhibit greater levels of grief symptoms than do their younger peers (2007, p.198). There are several factors that could contribute to this more pronounced display of mourning. On a cognitive development level, college students are able to think about death in a more relativistic and nuanced way than their younger peers; they can conceive the short- and long-term impact of a loss rather than just the immediate effects that a younger child can perceive. Having a more comprehensive view of death such as this could contribute to the greater grief symptoms that are experienced.

On a psychosocial level, older students are more interdependent and focused on others rather than the ego- and self-centric behavior that is a hallmark of younger children. However, this acknowledgement of relationship is also seen through the self-focused lens of emerging adulthood, which may focus the individual on the personal loss they feel and how the death shakes their world. This would lead to an older student feeling more affected by the loss of social connection with an attachment figure or any other relation.

When it comes to grief interventions for emerging adults, there is also a lack of literature for this age range. Most of the work focuses on either a general adult population, which may address needs and responsibilities that emerging adults are not yet facing, or younger children, which underserves the cognitive, social, and emotional needs that emerging adults have. The answer then, is to focus on grief work that identifies college students as the target of their interventions.

Prevalence of Grief in College

LaGrand notes that loss in young adulthood is just as crippling and staggering as those experienced at any age level, yet “[young adults] are, without question, the forgotten grievers” (1985, p. 15). Balk echoes this statement and focuses it specifically on the college population, claiming, “...the prevalence of grief during college remains a hidden reality and grieving college students a hidden population.” (1997, p. 208). This sentiment is echoed in many other articles that address the grieving or bereaved college student in today’s society. The idea that college students who are grieving are an ignored or underserved population seems to be the driving force behind much of the research that is available on the subject. Of the existing work, there seem to be two main areas that scholarly articles focus on. The first area centers on what makes grieving in college such a different process as opposed to other times in life. The second area focuses on

what personality traits, mechanisms, and coping behaviors serve to lessen the effects of the complicated grief and post-traumatic stress disorder that can be associated with bereavement.

Grief is a phenomena that is estimated to affect somewhere between 30-40% of the college population, and some studies even found percentages ranging from 50-60% when the bereavement was widened to include death of close friends as well as family members (Balk, Walker, & Baker, 2010, p.460). Balk's research has also found that college students display considerably more attachment to the deceased after their passing than do individuals in other age ranges. This continued attachment is correlated with a "more acute and enduring bereavement response" (Balk, 1996, p. 320), which suggests that college students may have a hard time with the last stage of Bowlby's grief model that encompasses reorganization of the attachment to the deceased. This could explain the presence of disordered grieving in college populations.

Effects of Grief During the College Years

Although grief is not listed as a condition in the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), many clinicians consider it a serious issue that is associated with considerable mental and physical health impairment (Schnider, Elhai, & Gray, 2007, p.344). One main reason that grief can have such a detrimental effect on college students is that it interferes with many of the important components of development that are a part of adolescence and young adulthood. The chief developmental tasks at this point in life are "forming intimate relationships that last, securing a clear identity, and selecting a career" (Balk, 2001, p.71). Grief can pervade all of these aspects of development in very different ways.

Relationships can be affected because non-grieving peers often have trouble relating to someone who is actively going through the bereavement process. As Balk, Walker, and Baker note, unaffected friends often fear coming into contact with a grieving college student. These

friends can frequently dismiss the intensity and duration of grief because they find their peers' grief disquieting and wearisome (2010, p.531). This often results in the person who is grieving being shunned and isolated, which is often the exact opposite of what they need to overcome their grief. Schnider shows that avoidant methods of coping have the highest correlation with complicated grief and posttraumatic stress (2007), which further reinforces the fact that students who are grieving need to be able to have peers who are willing to help them confront their grief. Bowlby's research also supports this notion, explaining:

...there is a tendency to underestimate how intensely distressing and disabling loss usually is and for how long the distress, and often the disablement, commonly lasts. Conversely, there is a tendency to suppose that a normal healthy person can and should get over a bereavement not only fairly rapidly but also completely. (Bowlby, 1980, p. 8)

Non-grieving peers who have not had the experience of bereavement in college often assume that the grief process should take less time than it actually does, which compounds on the other reasons that college students who are grieving feel they cannot rely on their peers for support.

When it comes to securing an identity and selecting a career, the other goals of development at this stage, grief can interfere by serving as a halting mechanism. A college student who is grieving may find their identity formation challenged as they begin to question their own competence and self-worth (Balk, 2001, p.69). This can directly affect the students' ability to plan for the future and look ahead to career and life goals as they become "stuck" in their grief. Michael and Synder claim that without the right interventions, it is very possible for college students to become caught in their grief, and instead of thriving in their collegiate environment they are fixed ruminating on the past (2005).

The College Setting

Outside of the individual's coping mechanisms and the reaction of their peers, the college environment plays a large role in how students deal with grief. This setting is ill suited for students who are grieving in a multitude of ways. With no one around to exercise control on their behalf, students often find that their resources of self-control and self-discipline are inadequate for the challenges that college life presents (Arnett, 2004, p. 127). Having to share dorm rooms and living with other peers also provides little alone time for the student to grieve in private. Not being able to express grief emotions can lead to chronic or complicated grief.

Perhaps the most detrimental aspect of college for students who are mourning is the geographic separation from their support system. According to Balk (1997, p.211), students reported that they were more likely to talk to their parents or siblings about death than they were to talk to their friends, peers, or professionals. LaGrand explains that ultimately this deprivation of family support forces students to turn to these less sought out sources (1985, p. 16). However, many students feel inadequate assisting their peers through bereavement, which leaves college students who are mourning few places left to turn.

Unfortunately, students turning to professional help available on campus have similar problems. Balk's findings show that out of the students interviewed who had sought professional help, only one-fifth had found the experience to be helpful (1997, p. 216). Analyses of students' experiences have found that at many universities, the support provided by counseling and mental health services are insufficient to help students deal with their grief.

According to Carzzini and May, counseling centers at universities face a unique problem in that a campus community is a microcosm of larger society, but it is far more transient and discontinuous (1985, p. 40). Students have to constantly readjust as friends move out of

residence halls, transfer into other departments or different universities all together, drop out, or graduate. This constant shift in friend support groups can leave counseling centers dealing with students not only facing grief, but also the problem of having little social support to fall back on.

When students feel that there is nowhere for them to turn, they may not reach out to anyone at all. LaGrand notes that many students may hide their emotions out of embarrassment or lack of support (1985). If these students are not able to address their feelings, the depression and grief that they feel can become a major problem.

Coping with Grief in College

There are several traits and mechanisms, however, which can aid college students in successfully dealing with their grief. First, it is important to understand what defines recovery from grief. According to Balk, a college student has effectively overcome their grief when "...[the student] can think or talk about the death without getting upset" (1997, p.216). Mathews and Servaty-Seib identify hardiness as an attribute that can have a positive effect when dealing with grief (2007). There are three main characteristics that define hardy individuals. The first is control, in that they believe they have some influence over how they experience events. The second is commitment, meaning that they are involved and dedicated to the activities in their lives. The third is challenge, in that they are able to construe their bereavement as a test that can lead to further development. All of these characteristics would enable the student to find meaning and hope in their grieving process, which lead to the findings of Michael and Synder.

In their article, Michael and Synder cite sense-making, benefit-finding, identity reconstruction, and hope as key factors in recovering from a traumatic bereavement (2005). Sense-making can be defined as "the attempt to answer why the death happened" (Michael & Synder, 2005, p.437). This involves placing the death in the larger context of the bereaved

individual's life, which can lead to benefit-finding. This is an avenue through which the student can find ways that the grief process adds value to their life, as well as ways in which they have grown or changed in a positive way in the wake of the bereavement. As mentioned before, death can have a profound effect on a college student's identity, so it is also important that identity reconstruction occurs so that the student can view their "new" self as a result of the death.

Schnider, Elhai, and Grey also look at coping strategies and how they affect the college student's grief process. By focusing on problems and avoiding confronting their grief, college students often had more severe symptoms of grief and posttraumatic stress (2007). This study suggests that emotional support is one of the most important things for a college student to move past their grief. So where on a college campus can a student go to find that support?

The Present Study

Based on the above information, this study is concerned with the following questions. How do college students experience and deal with grief, especially in cases of bereavement? Is there an atmosphere in college that makes it more difficult to grieve than in other locations? What coping mechanisms and support programs are most helpful to this population? How can colleges improve their currently offered support systems to better serve their students who are experiencing grief?

The goal of this thesis is to observe and explore bereavement and the grieving process as experienced by adolescents and young adults in their college years. One of the main foci will lie in examining major theories of bereavement care focused on the college years and emerging adulthood. After establishing the presence of grief related to bereavement, specific characteristics of the college environment that complicate grief will be identified. The most

commonly used support systems will also be examined, and the interventions and methods that are most effective in assisting students through this process will be identified.

It is hypothesized that the college environment complicates the grief process affected by the loss of a primary or secondary attachment figure. This causes the college student's grief process to deviate from expected norms established by Bowlby's attachment theory or take more effort to work through the expected stages.

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study were recruited from a body of undergraduate and graduate students at a private university in the New England region. These participants were at or over the age of 18 at the time of participation. 125 participants began the online survey, which had a 70% completion rate. Total completion was defined by the website which hosted the survey as participants who answered all questions, including optional follow up questions. For the purpose of this study, participants could be included despite neglecting to answer certain questions, since they were informed they could skip any questions that made them uncomfortable or those they did not wish to answer (see Appendix A). 12 respondents were excluded for neglecting to answer any questions past the first few questions, which regarded basic demographics. The remaining participants include 113 students. All participants acknowledged a waiver of consent as per the guidelines of an Institutional Review Board before starting the survey, and were provided with an information sheet after completion (see Appendix A).

Procedures

This study involved a mixed-methods data collection consisting of a quantitative and qualitative survey. Participants were recruited through online and campus postings. For the

survey, after reading a waiver of consent, the participants answered 17 questions based on their grief experiences through the medium of a web-hosted survey (see Appendix B). The survey was designed to primarily provide quantitative data relating to basic demographics and trends of the bereavement experience. The data show what relations are most commonly grieved (i.e. parent, grandparent, friend, etc.), general support systems that are utilized, and difficult aspects of grieving in college. Data was input to SPSS and analyzed via correlation and one way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Results

Demographics of Participants

Out of 125 respondents to the study, 113 were able to be included in the analysis. The collected demographics of participants included age, class year, and gender. Students who completed the survey were between the ages of 18 and 23 ($M = 20.55$, $SD = 1.16$). The gender break down of respondents was 16 male and 97 female, so 14% and 86% respectively. Of note was the spread of respondents across grades. 52% of respondents ($N = 59$) identified as having senior class standing, followed by juniors (22.1%, $N = 25$), sophomores (11.5%, $N = 13$), freshman (9.7%, $N = 11$), and then graduate students (4.4%, $N = 5$). Nearly 80% of respondents were upperclassmen or graduate students. This could be explained in two ways. The first is that as the principal investigator, I was a senior at the time this study was conducted so the methods of outreach used to recruit participants may have been more visible to other seniors and upperclassman. Another explanation is that the older a student gets, the more likely it is that they will know someone who has passed away. Based on this, there simply may have been more upperclassman with the experience of bereavement that would be interested in completing the survey.

Prevalence of Grief

After demographics had been collected, the first question of the survey asked if the respondent had experienced grief over the loss of a family member, friend, or other relation while in college. 79 respondents had grieved the loss of a relation, while 34 had not. This translates to grief experienced by 70% of the research sample. At Balk, Walker, and Baker's highest estimate, only 60% of a college campus would have been exposed to grief (2010). Either this result is specific to the university from which the sample was taken, the prevalence of grief is actually higher in colleges than studies suggest, or this could be indicative of the sample size of the study. Even with 113 participants, this study only covers about 2.5% of the student body at this particular university, which has roughly 5,000 students. Although attempts were made to recruit both grieving and non-grieving college students in recruitment materials (see Appendix C), it is likely that more students with the experience of grief were drawn to this study than students who have not been affected by grief, which may also have skewed the reported prevalence of grief.

Relationship to the Deceased

The next item on the survey asked participants to identify what relationship they had with the deceased (see Figure 3). The most commonly grieved relations were grandfathers and friends, comprising about two-thirds of responses. Responses that accounted for the "other" category included: family friends, pets, a great-grandmother, and a niece.

FIGURE 3

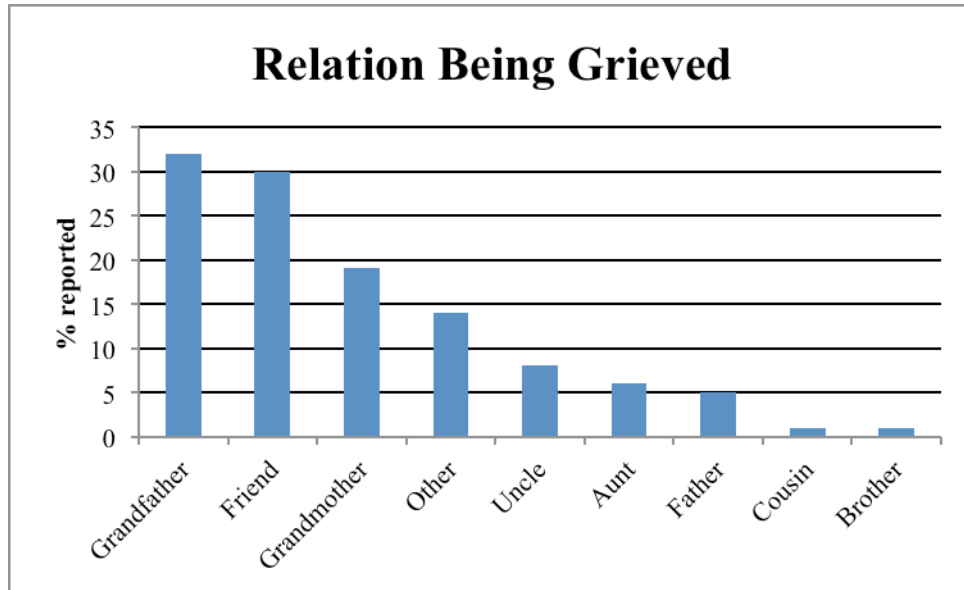


Figure 3: Role of deceased individual being grieved by university student.

Leave of Absence From Campus

The next question asked participants to identify whether they had left campus for any period of time to attend funeral services or other events regarding the death. The result was almost evenly split, with 52% of respondents remaining on campus while 48% left for a certain period of time. For those who left campus, they were gone from a range of one to seven days, with the average amount of time spent off campus being 3.33 days (s.d. = 1.69). For those students who stayed on campus, 90% elected to give a reason as to why they remained. For a third of these students, they happened to already be home for breaks from school at the time of the passing and services, so they did not have to actively miss any school. 24% of students were unable to attend services due to travel and expense restrictions. Many of these respondents acknowledged having an international background which meant that travel was not only expensive, but a large time commitment as well. 14% listed schoolwork and other commitments on campus as being the main reason that they were unable to leave, while 11% reported a

combination of travel and schoolwork concerns. 8% of respondents explained that they did not want to attend the services, so they remained on campus as well.

Sources of Support

Participants were asked to identify any and all support services they had utilized to assist with their grief process (see Figure 4). Besides a list from which they could choose, there was also an option to write in other sources of support. The most commonly used resources were parents, which was closely followed by friends. This is interesting since, as stated earlier, much of the literature, and specifically Balk's work, states that students who are grieving are more likely to seek support from parents, siblings, and other family members before approaching friends. This sample of students, however, sought out friends for support before all family members except for parents. Other sources of support that students wrote into the survey were rabbis, deans, sorority members, teammates, athletic coaches, and aunts.

Several students noted they turned to their professors and academic advisors for support. Participants were also asked if they had received accommodations from their professors regarding schoolwork. Roughly 40% of respondents had received extensions whether in the form of extensions, extra help, or another form of assistance. 60% of students had not received accommodations either because professors had denied them or they simply had not asked for them.

FIGURE 4

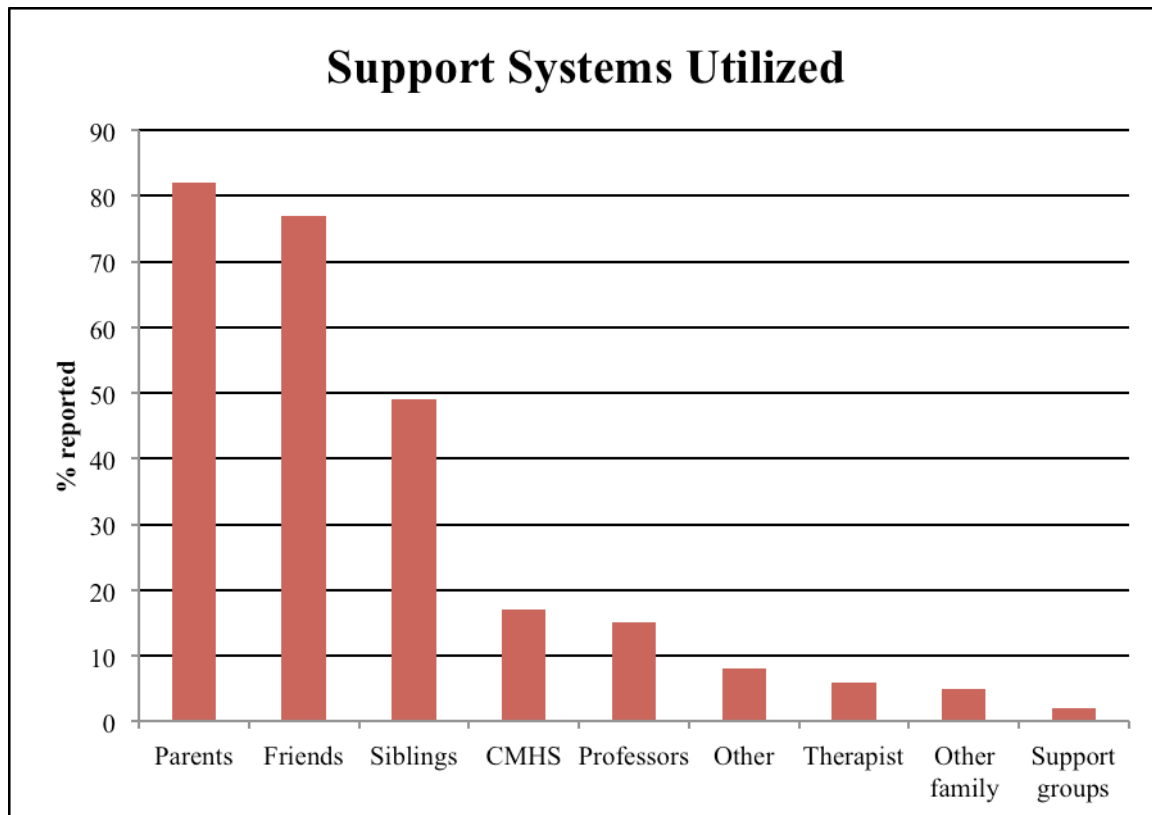


Figure 4: Support systems utilized by students while grieving in college.

An open-ended question included in the interview asked respondents to identify what had helped them the most in their grief process. 65 of the 79 grieving students elected to answer this question. The most common answer was that friends had helped the most with grieving, reported by 31% of the respondents. Again, these findings contradict Balk's sentiment that friends can be poor providers of support since they often feel overwhelmed, unprepared, or lose patience after prolonged grief of a friend. The next most common response was family members (usually parents or siblings) with 20% of the response. This was followed, in order of response rate, by talking or reminiscing about the deceased (12%), the passing of time (12%), distractions (9%), professional help (6%), professors (5%), and personal efforts (5%). It is interesting that such a low number of students identified professional help, such as therapists, counseling services, and support groups as being the most helpful, since most research proposes the establishment of

more professional resources for students. This could be because few students have utilized professional services due to their unavailability on campus, so they were not able to experience their usefulness. Or it could be that these findings are consistent with Balk’s notion that not many young people find professional services to be helpful (1997).

Aspects of College Life that Affect Grief

Participants were asked to rank 6 items from the most to least difficult aspect of grieving while at college. The options to rank were: being away from home, relating to friends, keeping up with school work, keeping up with social events, finding time to grieve, and the grief process itself. Based on mean ranking, being away from home was ranked as the hardest (M = 2.62, s.d. = 1.71). This was followed, in order from most to least difficult, by finding time to grieve (M = 3.09, s.d. = 1.79), the grief process (M = 3.30, s.d. = 1.65), keeping up with schoolwork (M = 3.39, s.d. = 1.65), relating to friends (M = 3.95, s.d. = 1.53), and keeping up with social events (M = 4.64, s.d. = 1.15).

FIGURE 5

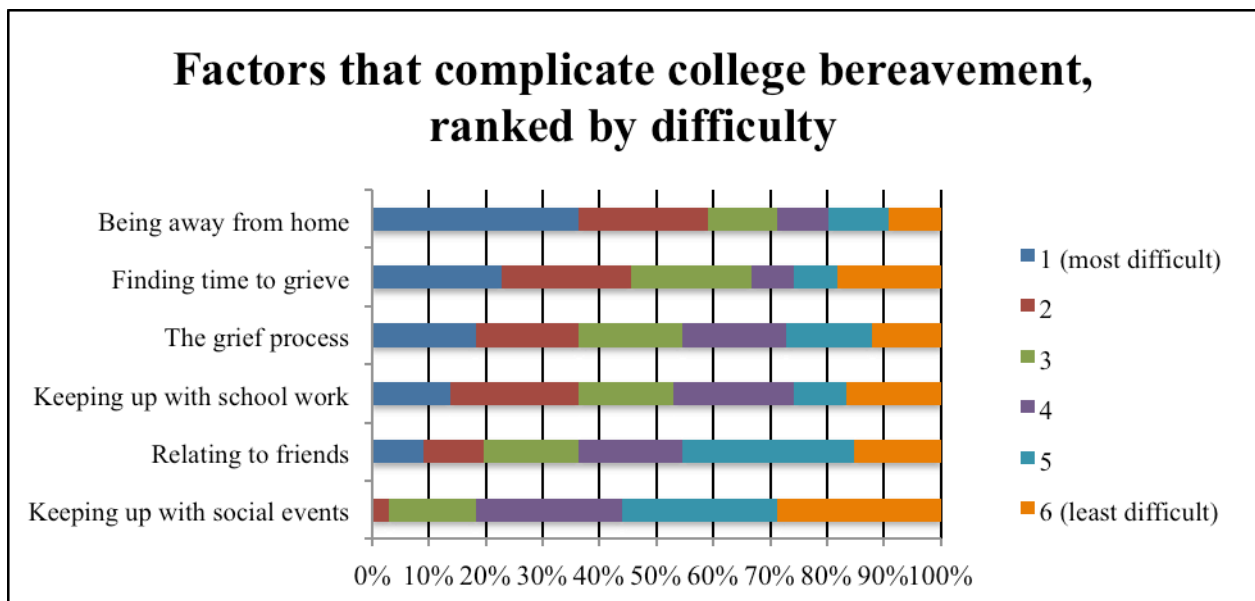


Figure 5: Factors that contribute to difficulty grieving in college, ranked from most to least difficult.

When analyzing responses based on the make-up of top and bottom choices (split into the highest ranked three and lowest ranked three), it is easy to spot trends in difficulty (see Figure 5). Over 70% of respondents placed being away from home within the top three most difficult aspects. For most respondents, factors that related to school and the grief process were ranked within the top three most difficult parts of grieving in college. The options that focused on social factors, such as relating to friends and keeping up with social events were typically ranked on the lower end of the spectrum. This is interesting, since it contradicts Balk's assertions that social factors are some of the more difficult aspects of grieving in college. Keeping up with social event was the only option that was never ranked as the most difficult aspect of grief, which shows how, at least to this group of students who are grieving, social factors are not the most important parts of the bereavement process.

Length of Grief

As documented by many researchers, there is no one agreed upon time that should suffice for completing grief work. Rosenblatt even noted that there are some individuals who may never be finished grieving (1996). That being said, asking students how long they felt they had been grieving was included in the survey to see not only if students could quantify the amount of time they had been affected by the bereavement, but also if the amount of time was one that could have a serious impact on college life and studies. Since some respondents quantified the exact number of weeks or months, while some gave more general responses, replies were aggregated into the general categories of days, weeks, months, years, and other, which usually stood for answers which indicated a continuous process that had been ongoing since the death with no time range given.

The most common answer was that grief lasted for months, with 51.7% of respondents indicating this time frame. Even one month of grief makes up a significant portion of a semester in college, and most students reported periods of many months more than that. This time frame of grief shows just how debilitating grief in college can be. Other responses were broken down into days (3.3%), weeks (18.3%), years (15%), and other (11.7%).

Other Information

The last question of the survey asked if there was anything else that the participants would like to share about their experience. This question provided some of the most interesting data to come out of the survey.

A commonly addressed subject was the aspect of receiving accommodations for schoolwork. While some students noted that they had received great support from professors in terms of accommodations and emotional care, others were not as lucky. Some students explained that many professors were not obliging and refused to grant extensions, resulting in one participant failing an exam. Other students noted that even when accommodations were given in the form of extensions, it only resulted in them falling behind in other work. One student explained that while professors were very understanding of the limitations she faced when she traveled home for the wake and funeral, she felt that they ignored the limitations of the actual grief process when she returned to campus. She explained, “When I was physically not there, professors were understanding and compassionate, but once I was back it was as though nothing had happened. The grieving process once back on campus was ignored.” These responses indicate that educating professors about what to expect with students who are grieving would be helpful, and perhaps even setting university-wide standards for accommodations or support from professors could be beneficial.

Another common theme was that for several students, this was their first major loss and experience with bereavement. One participant explained, “[This was my] First loss of [a] loved one. [I had] Never grieved before, ignored the feelings at first and they manifested themselves in bad ways. Recognition of grief was extremely important to moving on.” It is important to be aware that for students who have not experienced loss, they may not even realize that the feelings they are suffering are in fact grief. A way to combat this would be to have more active outreach from mental health services on campuses to help students identify their feelings and know where they can seek help. This was echoed by several participants who added that they wish there were more professional resources offered at more times for students on campus, since varying schedules makes it hard for students to find one specific time to meet.

Perhaps the most noted response discussed the effect that college life had on grief. Many participants felt that life on campus doesn’t stop because a death has occurred, and this forces students to try and address their grief while juggling their academic and extracurricular commitments as well. Many expressed that they felt there was no time in a college student’s schedule to grieve, which only prolonged their negative emotions. One student spoke to this problem, and also referenced the challenges that face the in between status of emerging adulthood:

Life doesn't stop when a family member dies - classes are one thing, but there are also sports practices, social events, meetings, clubs, and organizations to make up. It's much more complex as a college student vs. a high school student or even as a removed adult.

This notion that college students face more pressure than high school students or “removed adults,” as they term it, is the exact sentiment of emerging adulthood. The challenges at this

stage in life are so unique and different from any other, and grief has a real ability to affect these individuals on a very deep level.

Interactions

Through ANOVAs and correlations, the collected data were analyzed for any interactions between responses. The first interaction found was calculated for effect of the length of grief on ranking of difficulty of being away from home where $F(4,54) = 2.425$, $p = 0.059$. The data showed that those who reported shorter periods of grief were more likely to rank being away from home as one of the hardest aspects of grieving on campus. This could be explained by shorter grief focusing on the immediate aftereffects of the passing and the knee-jerk desire to go home and be surrounded by family. A shorter grieving period also condenses the range of emotions into a very short time period, which could result in a more acute experience of these feelings. This would only heighten the desire to be at home and receive additional support from family members.

Another significant interaction showed that the type of relationship the individual was grieving affected how participants ranked the difficulty of keeping up with social events, where $F(3,61) = 3.590$, $p = 0.019$ and $r(63) = 0.361$, $p = 0.002$. For this analysis, the types of relationships being grieved were grouped into older family members (grandparents, parents, etc.), younger family members (siblings, cousins, etc.), non-family (friends, other), or multiple bereaved relationships. The results showed that those grieving the loss of older family members had a harder time keeping up with social events. However, the death of older family would most likely include an attachment figure (either a parent or grandparent). The loss of an attachment figure is much more difficult than losing another connection, so this could impede students from wanting to be out socializing and interacting with non-grieving peers.

Other significant interactions stemmed from where students received their support. Participants who received their support from friends found it harder to keep up with schoolwork while grieving ($F(1,63) = 10.387, p = 0.002$ and $r(63) = -0.367, p = 0.002$). This, perhaps, could show the effects of Balk's claim that friends do not provide the best support for peers who are grieving. Also, since friends can be found in classrooms, on sports field, in dorms, at the library, and countless other places on campus, students could be receiving their support at any point during the day instead of during a scheduled appointment with a professional resource. The times that these sessions with friends could be occurring at may overlap with when students should be studying or doing work, resulting in difficulty keeping up with school assignments.

Receiving support from siblings affected two categories that participants were able to rank. The first was being away from home where $F(1,63) = 4.268, p = 0.043$ and $r(63) = -0.252, p = 0.043$. It showed that students who relied on siblings for support found it harder to be away from home while grieving. Since there is a chance that most siblings reside at home with the rest of the student's family, this could explain the difficulty of being away from home. Having a main source of support at home would only increase the student's desire to return there. Sibling support also had an effect on the ranking of keeping up with social events where $F(1,63) = 8.325, p = 0.005$ and $r(63) = .342, p = .005$. Those who received support from their siblings felt that keeping up with social events was one of the least difficult parts of grieving while at school. This seems almost contradictory to the previous influence of friend support and keeping up with social events, since siblings are probably close in age to the student's peers. However, siblings may know the student who is grieving better than friends do, and might be able to provide more tailored support that enables them to find keeping up with social events less difficult.

Another interesting correlation came when the effects of different reasons for staying on campus were calculated for their effect on ranking the difficulty of being away from home. With $F(4, 26) = 4.506, p = 0.007$, it was seen that those students who had to stay on campus due to school work or other commitments had an easier time dealing with feelings of being away from home. Those students who had to stay on campus due to travel concerns, or the combination of travel and schoolwork concerns, had a harder time and were more likely to rank being away from home as one of the harder aspects of grieving. Perhaps students were able to see schoolwork as a more understandable, albeit still unfortunate, reason for staying on campus while students who could not travel home due to costs or time restrictions felt more upset about not being able to return home. The decision to stay because of schoolwork is also one that the students can make for themselves, while the decision to stay because of money and travel time may be more open to input from family members and other sources. This lack of control could also contribute to the student's disappointment at having to stay at school.

The student's class year demonstrated an effect on how the student ranked the difficulty of keeping up with social events with $F(4, 60) = 2.794, p = 0.034$ and $r(63) = -.258, p = .019$. The higher the grade level the student was in, and consequently the older the student was, the harder it became for them to keep up with social events. This could be because older students may have more commitments, a more strenuous work load, and other factors on top of bereavement that may make keeping up with social events harder in general for them.

The last significant connection that was found concerned the effect of receiving accommodations on the ranking of difficulty of keeping up with schoolwork where $F(1,61) = 3.197, p = 0.079$ and $r(61) = 0.223, p = 0.039$. Contrary to what make seem logical, students who received accommodations reported more difficulty with keeping up with their schoolwork. This

echoes the sentiments of some of the participants who claimed that receiving accommodations in some classes only set them behind in other classes. This could also be due to the fact that the students may have already been feeling pressure when it came to their schoolwork, which is why they were moved to ask for the accommodations when other students who were grieving were not.

Discussion

Summarizing the most important points from above, a substantial portion of students in college report having experienced grief due to the loss of a loved one. Most students report actively grieving for a period of several months. The aspects of the college environment that students find the most difficult to deal with while grieving are being away from home, finding time to grieve, the grief process itself, and keeping up with schoolwork. Receiving accommodations from professors was a divisive issue for students with some having success receiving and using accommodations while others had more trouble with the process. Students are most likely to get support from their parents and friends when addressing their grief. Where students get their support from may effect what factors of grieving in college they find most difficult. Lastly, students make special note that college life doesn't stop when a death happens and because of this grieving in college is more complex then at other times in life.

Reflections on Attachment Theory

LaGrand states that:

A person's ability to adapt to dramatic life changes is believed to be a function of coping patterns learned very early in life, coupled with the success or failure that the person experienced in employing those techniques (1985, p. 23).

The attachments that students have early in life can contribute greatly to their reactions to and movement through the grief process. While not every death that students in this study were

grieving was that of an attachment figure, Bowlby notes that individuals can "...become attached to others of the same age, or only a little older..." (1969, p. 217). This would result in students experiencing the same grief patterns regardless of whether the deceased was a primary or secondary attachment figure, or perhaps not even an attachment figure at all. The phase of yearning could be the main source of the students' desires to return home while grieving, since perhaps that was the last place the deceased person was.

Disorientation and disorganization would have profound effects on the student's ability to socialize and form new connections, making the social aspects of college difficult to deal with. Most students reported grieving for several months, which suggests that this stage can comprise a large part of the college student's experience with grief. This, perhaps, is the stage that support services should address the most. Being able to contextualize life without the lost figure will help students work through this phase and will enable them to confront what may be the hardest part of the grief process.

The last stage of reorganization and resolution is an important step for the student to reach. When students feel that they have successfully worked through the grief process, they can use this experience to combat any future traumatic events that they encounter. The support systems that they engage with can have profound effects on the student's ability to reach this final stage. These systems need to not only speak to the general nature of grief work, but they must also address the unique challenges that come with grieving in a college environment.

In a book published eight years after the final volume of *Attachment and Loss*, Bowlby addressed some common misconceptions about disordered grief as well. He acknowledged that the commonly held belief that six months should be the standard length of grief was too short, and that grief in mentally healthy adults could last much longer (1998, p. 32). Bowlby also

pointed out that grief responses that were commonly thought to indicate complicated grief, were in fact indicative of healthy mourning. These responses encompassed anger directed at third parties, themselves, or the person lost, disbelief that the loss has occurred, and an unconscious tendency to search for the lost person in the hopes of a reunion (1988). These could help explain why college students seem to linger in the disorganization and disorientation stage. These beliefs also support Balk's research that indicated that college students report more attachment to the deceased than those in other stages of life. A prolonged searching for the deceased would keep attachment behaviors primed and prolong the student's experience of grief.

Effects of the College Environment

Out of all of the aspects of the college environment that complicate the grief process, being away from the support of home is the most difficult for students to deal with. Social support is a key process of moving through grief work, and when the student is separated by time and distance from arguably the most important provider of that support there are bound to be negative effects.

Finding time to grieve was ranked as the second hardest aspect of grieving in college. While this was included as an option because I felt finding time would be related to the lack of privacy found in communal college residences, it seemed to have more to do with the hectic nature of college students' schedules. In fact, Parkes claims that "both living with others and social support can mitigate some of the intensity of grief and loneliness" (2006, p. 191). His work showed that living with others while grieving actually resulted in lower levels of grief and loneliness when the co-habitants were people that the person who is grieving could confide in. For students with supportive roommates who are willing to listen and talk through the student griever's concerns, this can provide a crucial support system.

The respondents who identified struggling with the grief process spoke to the fact that for many college students bereavement is a new experience. The lack of knowledge they have about the emotions they should be feeling, and the overwhelming nature of having to address these feelings while still attending classes, completing work, and socializing, can be too much for the student to handle. This is why social and psychological support systems such as family, friends, and mental health services are so important for college students who are grieving. They need to not only be aware that they should ask for help, but they also need to know where to find it.

Support Systems

It is no surprise that parents were reported as the most commonly utilized support system for college students. When their world and sense of security is shaken by the death of a loved one, it is natural to seek out what for many students is their first primary attachment figure for support and comfort. The separation from parents while the student is at school no doubt contributes to the unique grieving found in college, since the student must put in more effort to contact their support system. In most cases, this support can only through communication and physical comforting is out of the question unless the student returns home or the parents come to the school. While parents do what they can, it seems that physical comforting is often left to friends.

While much research suggests that friends are poor sources of support for college students experiencing grief, the participants in this study seemed to really benefit from the community of peers they surrounded themselves with. McCarthy agrees with these students, stating, “The presence of close friends, for example, is the category of people most often mentioned by young people as being helpful” (2010, p. 30). If the prevalence of grief found in this study is accurate, the peers found at this university could also be more likely to have had a

grief experience, enabling them to provide support and be more understanding than the peers that Balk's research encountered.

The students who identified the passing of time as being one of the more helpful aspects of dealing with grief supported Bowlby's testament that grief often takes six months or longer to acknowledge and address. Sometimes students just need some distance between themselves and the passing to be able to come to terms with their grief and recontextualize their lives without the presence of the deceased. The notion that talking and reminiscing about the deceased which was brought up by participants as a way to help with the management of grief also ties in to Bowlby's theory. Being able to talk through the disorientation that the student feels and remembering the positive aspects of their relationship with the deceased can help with the transition through the stages that may be understood by the application of Bowlby's grief theory. Regardless of whether these conversations are happening with grief professionals or friends, being able to talk about their feelings, emotions, and experience is crucial for the student to move through the grief process.

Suggestions for College Campuses

The first aspect of grieving on campus that should be addressed by mental health services is the difficulty of being away from home. Perhaps if schools could establish a leave of absence policy for students that addressed concerns about missing work or other commitments, students would be more likely to go home and take part in the services and receive support from their families. Having an emergency fund set up to aid students with travel costs is another step that universities could take to aid those who are deterred from returning home due to high last-minute ticket prices.

The next way that universities could help is by establishing guidelines and suggestions for professors and faculty to follow when working with bereaved students. There will be differences across professors and subject matter, but offering a set of recommendations for professors could help students and professors reach an agreement about what to expect from each other. Instructors should be willing to extend deadlines and offer help to students who are recently bereaved to proactively address the fact that many students who are grieving become overwhelmed by work and drop out of school (Balk, 2001, p.75) LaGrand also explains that:

Professors often misinterpret a student's sporadic absenteeism or daydreaming as a lack of interest and commitment to learning when in the individual is having a "bad" day, a normal regression in the grief process that forces him or her to deal with intense feelings of anger, guilt, or depression (1985, p. 21).

It is important that professors not only are aware that students are grieving but that they also are cognizant of what grief looks like in the college population. When they have the appropriate expectations of these students, it will be easier to facilitate discussions of accommodations for students. It may also be helpful for the university to have a set procedure in place for providing accommodations for students experiencing grief. This will eliminate several components that render the current process difficult: students' apprehension of asking for accommodations, professors' uncertainty of what kind of help to provide, and different expectations from different professors which can create the compounding of work that students reported experiencing. Giving students some assistance with managing their schoolwork will allow them to divert some of their focus to the more crucial aspects of grief work.

Providing more social support for student is another way that universities could improve the campus environment for students who are grieving. LaGrand explains that the lack of awareness of the impact that loss can have on students contributes to barriers to finding social support on college campuses (1985). To better prepare peers and friends to assist students who

are grieving, LaGrand presents several options that colleges could implement (1985, p. 26). First, Resident Assistant (RA) training should be made to include mental health training – teaching RAs how to recognize symptoms of grief, how to approach a student who is grieving, and where they can make recommendations for the student to receive help.

One way to expand this idea would be to include this information in part of freshman orientation programming. The goal of the program would be to show that grief is an acceptable and healthy process. This would help students who are experiencing grief identify their feelings. It would also increase students' knowledge of grief and help them feel more prepared if they find themselves providing support to a bereaved friend. Balk takes this idea even further, suggesting that this time could be used to train non-bereaved students to provide peer support through structured interventions that are tailored to adolescents and young adults (2001).

By raising awareness of grief on campus, students and faculty alike would be able to create a better environment for students who are experiencing grief. The stigma of grief would be reduced, and students would feel more secure about reaching out for help and support. These interventions address many of the problems that make college such a difficult place to grieve, and would no doubt make the path to recovery a little bit easier.

Lastly, changes could be made to the counseling and mental health services provided on campus. One crucial change could be the transition from a passive to an active role of identifying students who need help dealing with grief. Instead of waiting for students to come to them, counseling and mental health services could have more awareness and publicity campaigns to educate students on the signs of grief. This would address the students who are experiencing bereavement for the first time and may not even realize that they are experiencing grief. Helping students self-identify their needs would encourage more to seek help.

Increasing the availability of support groups would also be useful for college students experiencing grief. Respondents noted that talking and reminiscing was a helpful way for them to deal with their grief. Perhaps the safest setting for this sharing to occur is in a group with other bereaved students. However, counseling and mental health services may only offer these groups at one specific time a week. With the varied and hectic schedules that most students have, more availability needs to be generated so that more students will be able to attend meetings and participate in these groups.

Of course, there are barriers that would impede any of these suggestions. Many of these programs would require funding, and cost restrictions would limit what would be able to be implemented on campus. Faculty independence and autonomy would also complicate the process of creating guidelines for how to address the needs of students who are grieving in a classroom setting. The student's fear of being stigmatized for their grief may also complicate the process of creating outreach programs from mental health services. These are all factors that should be considered before implementing any of these suggestions.

By creating awareness of grief on campus, educating peers and faculty about what grief entails, creating more options for students to seek support, and having university-wide policies regarding leaves of absence, universities may be able to positively effect the world of students who are grieving. Grieving in college is a process that may never be easy, but increasing support systems and sources on campus will only benefit this vulnerable population.

Limitations of the Study

Although this research has reached its aims, there were some unavoidable limitations. First, the time constraint of one academic year that was placed on this research forced certain aspects of data collection and analysis to be cut short. It was planned for the quantitative survey

to be supplemented with a more in-depth qualitative interview (see Appendix D) that delved into the nature of the relationship between the student griever and the deceased in order to comment on attachment and relationship patterns. The interview also explored utilization of support services and campus life in order to see what aspects were servings as risk or protective factors. Due to time constraints, there was not enough time to recruit participants, transcribe interviews, and analyze the rich answers that were provided in a way that would do the interviewees justice. This resulted in the interviews not being included in the final presentation of data, which detracted from the full view of grief on campus that could have been presented.

It was also assumed that participants in this study would grieve in ways that fit into the model of Bowlby's attachment theory. However, it was not established if participants were grieving the loss of a primary or secondary attachment figure. Although Bowlby's theory should apply even in cases of grief influenced by the death of non-attachment figures as long as the person who is mourning has some connection to the deceased, it cannot be guaranteed. The forgone interview would have provided more insight to the nature of the relationship between the student griever and the deceased and enabled a more in depth look at the grief process as related to attachment theory. Therefore the presupposition that respondents would be grieving their lost family member, friend, or other connection as they would an attachment figure may have led to data being skewed.

It is also important to note that these results, especially those concerning the difficulty of being away from home while grieving, are specific to this residential college. Results could be different for commuter students or schools. Results could also be different for schools in other regions of the country or those with different mental health services offered on campus.

Another limitation of this research is that the quantitative interview did not have questions concerning the culture, religion, and spirituality of the respondents. Culture, religion, and spirituality can have a marked impact on how individuals grieve. There are also effects based on what displays of grief are considered normative and acceptable within their culture or religion. Not being able to account for these differences among participants could be masking correlations and explanations for results that at this time cannot be accounted for.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

The combination of this research with the body of work that already exists about grief and bereavement in college, shows a clear need for the restructuring of counseling and mental health services in college. Addressing the specific needs of students and the unique college environment would serve grieving college students well and give them focused attention that they need. Programs that increase peer support, allowances for students to travel home for services, and protocols for professors and faculty to use for grieving students would also improve conditions for this vulnerable population.

In the future, it would be interesting to see if there are gender differences among college grievers through recruitment of a more evenly split gender sample. It would also be intriguing to see if grief styles differed among religions or cultures, something that was not accounted for in this study. Finding differences among these groups could help campus-based mental health services make more informed choices about the types of interventions employed based on the specific student they are serving.

Spirituality can have profound effects on coping, regardless of religion, culture, or other factors. Kuo, Arnold, and Rodriguez-Rubio found that intrinsic spirituality reduced psychological distress, promoted collective coping, and reduced avoidance coping (2013). The

link between adaptive coping strategies and spirituality has been explored in many studies and has been shown to positively correlate in many settings from hospitals to college campuses. Future studies could further examine the link between spirituality and positive coping styles, which could lead to the inclusion of university chaplains in professional support services on campus for students who are experiencing grief.

The use of focus groups to collect data would be another interesting application for future work in this field. As the principal investigator, I designed the survey used in this study based on my own experiences with grief and bereavement in college, so there may be a bias towards what I believed was important based on the literature. Using focus groups of grieving college students to drive the conversation about what they feel are key aspects of grief and sources of support would add more voices to the discussion and may raise issues that were not even brought up in this study.

Even with all the work still to be done, this study has made connections between factors in college life and grieving that have not been seen in previous research. Suggestions for improving the environment on campus address these issues and present solutions that could be implemented on campuses across the country. These connections and the informed suggestions that have been put forth will hopefully add to the body of knowledge on grief and bereavement in the college setting.

References

- Ainsworth, M. D., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text rev.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469-480.
- Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging Adulthood: the winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Attig, T. (1996). *How We Grieve: Relearning the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Balk, D. E. (1996). Attachment and Reactions of Bereaved College Students: A Longitudinal Study. In D. Klass, P. R. Silverman, & S. L. Nickman (Eds.), *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief*. Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis.
- Balk, David E. (1997): Death, bereavement and college students: A descriptive Analysis, *Mortality: Promoting the interdisciplinary study of death and dying*, 2:3, 207-220
- Balk, David E. (2001): College Student Bereavement, Scholarship, and the University: A Call for University Engagement, *Death Studies*, 25:1, 67-84
- Balk, D. E., Walker, A. C., & Baker, A. (2010). Prevalence and Severity of College Student Bereavement Examined in a Randomly Selected Sample. *Death Studies*, 34, 459-468.
- Barnard, P., Morland, I., & Nagy, J. (1999). *Children, Bereavement, and Trauma: Nurturing Resilience*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley.

- Benoit, D. (2004). Infant-parent attachment: Definition, types, antecedents, measurement and outcome. *Paediatrics and Child Health*, 9(8), 541-545.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment. Attachment and Loss (Vol. 1)*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Bowlby, J. (1979). *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds*. New York: Routledge.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Loss: Sadness and Depression. Attachment and Loss (Vol. 1)*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bretherton, I. (1992). The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. *Developmental Psychology*, 28, 759-775.
- Corazzini, J. G., & May, T. M. (1985). The Role of the Counseling Center in Responding to Student Death. In E. S. Zinner (Ed.), *Coping with Death on Campus*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (1998). Mapping the domain of expressivity: Multi-method evidence for a hierarchical model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 170-191.
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1969). *On Death and Dying*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Kuo, B. C. H., Arnold, R., & Rodriguez-Rubio, B. (2013). Mediating effects of coping in the link between spirituality and psychological distress in a culturally diverse undergraduate sample. *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture*, 1-12.
- LaGrand, L. E. (1985). College Student Loss and Response. In E. S. Zinner (Ed.), *Coping with Death on Campus*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

- Leick, N., & Davidsen-Nielsen, M. (1991). *Healing Pain: Attachment, Loss, and Grief Therapy* (D. Stoner, Trans.). New York: Routledge.
- Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1986). Discovery of an Insecure-Disorganized/Disoriented Attachment Pattern. In T. B. Brazelton & M. W. Yogman (Eds.), *Affective Development in Infancy* (pp. 95-124). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Mathews, L. L., & Servaty-Seib, H. L. (2007). Hardiness and Grief in a Sample of Bereaved College Students. *Death Studies, 31*, 183-204.
- McCarthy, J. R. (2010). Bereavement, young people, and social context. In B. Monroe & F. Kraus (Eds.), *Brief Interventions with Bereaved Children*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Michael, S. T., & Synder, C. R. (2005). Getting Unstuck: The Roles of Hope, Finding Meaning, and Rumination in the Adjustment to Bereavement Among College Students. *Death Studies, 29*, 435-458.
- Osterweis, M., Solomon, F., & Green, M. (Eds.). (1984). *Bereavement: Reactions, Consequences, and Care*. Committee for the Study of Health Consequences of the Stress of Bereavement: Institute of Medicine.
- Parkes, C. M. (2006). *Love and Loss: The Roots of Grief and its Complications*. New York: Routledge.
- Rolls, L. (2010). Theoretical perspectives: linking research and practice. In B. Monroe & F. Kraus (Eds.), *Brief Interventions with Bereaved Children*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Rosenblatt, P. C. (1996). Grief that Does Not End. In D. Klass, P. R. Silverman, & S. L. Nickman (Eds.), *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief*. Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis.
- Rowling, L. (2010). Schools and grief: Attending to people and place. In B. Monroe & F. Kraus (Eds.), *Brief Interventions with Bereaved Children*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schnider, K. R., Elhai, J. D., & Gray, M. J. (2007). Coping Style Use Predicts Posttraumatic Stress and Complicated Grief Symptom Severity Among College Students Reporting a Traumatic Loss. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 54(3), 344-350.
- Tanner, J. L., & Arnett, J. J. (2011). Presenting "Emerging Adulthood": What Makes It Developmentally Distinctive? In J. J. Arnett, M. Kloep, L. B. Hendry, & J. L. Tanner (Eds.), *Debating Emerging Adulthood*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Way, P., & Bremner, I. (2010). Therapeutic interventions. In B. Monroe & F. Kraus (Eds.), *Brief Interventions with Bereaved Children*. New York: Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY Waiver

STUDY TITLE: Grief and Bereavement in College Students

INVESTIGATOR: Kathryn Galasso

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE: This study involves research on the experience of grief and bereavement by college students. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to examine how resiliency, attachment, and the college environment dictate how students grieve. Even if you have not experienced the death of a loved one, it would be beneficial for you to fill out this survey by answering “No” to the first question and leaving the rest blank. This will enable us to see what percentage of students experience grief while in college. We expect that this survey will take 15 minutes of your time.

PROCEDURES: You will be asked a series of questions about your experience of grief and bereavement while at [school]. If you are uncomfortable with any question, you may skip the question all together.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RISK: The results of this study will be used to complete a Senior Honors Thesis and may be published in a scholarly book or journal or presented at professional conferences. However, there is no identifying data linking you to the survey other than your age, gender, and class year. Data will be summed by these parameters, making individual identification impossible in the final product. All data will be kept in a locked room and on a password protected computer. There are also unforeseeable risks with respect to the emotions involved in thinking about grief and bereavement.

WITHDRAWAL OF PARTICIPATION: Your participation is voluntary. Should you decide at any time during the study that you no longer wish to participate; you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation without penalty.

COSTS BENEFITS TO YOU: There are no direct costs involved with participation. There are no direct benefits to you besides the experience of participating in the study. However, we expect that the results of this study will add to the body of knowledge on grief, bereavement, attachment and resiliency, as well as help inform new grieving interventions and resources.

REQUEST FOR MORE INFORMATION: You may ask more questions about the study at any time. Please e-mail the principal investigator at [email] with any questions or concerns about the study. In addition, you may contact the Office of the Institutional Review Board at [number].

SIGNATURE: I confirm that the purpose of the research, the study procedures, the possible risks and discomforts as well as benefits have been explained to the participant. All questions have been answered. The participant has agreed to participate in the study.

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX B

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Class Year: _____

1) Have you grieved the loss of a family member, friend, or other relation while at [school]?
Yes No

2) If yes, what was your relationship with them? (circle all that apply)

Grandmother Grandfather Mother Father Sister Brother

Aunt Uncle Cousin Friend Other: _____

3) Did you leave [school name] for the wake/funeral? Yes No

3a) If yes, how many days were you away from campus? _____

3b) If no, why did you stay on campus? _____

4) Did you seek help from any of the following while grieving? (check all that apply)

___ Friends ___ Counseling and Mental Health Services at [school]

___ Therapists outside of [school] ___ Support groups outside of [school]

___ Parents ___ Siblings

___ Professors ___ Other family members: _____

___ Other: _____

5) Did you receive any accommodations from your professors regarding schoolwork? Yes No

6) Please rank the following about grieving while at [school], with 1 being the most difficult and 6 being the least difficult:

___ Being away from home	___ Keeping up with social events
___ Relating to friends	___ Finding time to grieve
___ Keeping up with school work	___ The grief process

7) How long do you think you were/have been grieving?

8) What has helped you the most in your grieving process?

9) Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience?

Thank you for your time!

If you would be interested in participating in a more in-depth interview, please email [[PI email]]

APPENDIX C

School Postings Website Advertisement:

Participants needed for a grief/bereavement study

Have you experienced the loss of a loved one while studying at [school]? This thesis is examining the experience of grief as a college student and needs your input! If you are a [school] student over the age of 18 and interested in participating, there is a short anonymous survey with general questions about your experience here <url>. Even if you have not grieved the loss of someone while at [school], your input is important so we can gain an accurate look at what portion of the [school] population has this experience. If you are interested in participating in a more in depth interview, please contact [[PI email]]

Facebook Advertisement

Help me with my Senior Honors Thesis!

For my senior honors thesis, I am examining the experience of the grieving college student and how the college atmosphere dictates how we experience grief. If you have lost a loved one while studying at [school], your input would really be appreciated!

If you are a [school] student over the age of 18 and interested in participating in a short anonymous survey with general questions about your experience, please fill the survey out here <url>. Even if you have not grieved the loss of someone while at [school], your input is important so we can gain an accurate look at what portion of the [school] population has this experience.

If you are interested in participating in a more in depth interview about your experience, please contact [[PI email]]

Thank you so much for your help!

Note: Where it says “<url>” in these advertisements, the website address for an online version of the survey hosted by Qualtrics will be provided.

APPENDIX D

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. This interview will focus on grief and bereavement while at college. For the purposes of this study, bereavement refers to the death and any events surrounding it, while grief refers to the emotions experienced in the aftermath.

I want to remind you that your participation is completely voluntary, and if at any time you wish to withdraw yourself and your answers from the study, please do not hesitate to contact me. Also, if you do not feel comfortable answering any questions just let me know and we can move on to the next one.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Ok, so let's get started. First, I'd to ask a few questions just to get to know you.

Can you tell me your age, gender, and class year here at [school]?

Relationship

Let's start by talking about your relationship with the person who died.

Who is it that you were, or are currently, grieving while in college?

And how long did you know them for?

How would you describe your relationship with them?

What kind of activities did you and [name] participate in together?

Is there anything specific that reminds you of [name], such as an event, time of year, or item?

When do you find yourself thinking of [name] most?

Would you mind sharing one of your favorite memories with [name]?

Is there anything else that you'd like to share with me about your relationship with [name]?

Bereavement

We're now going to move on to the bereavement section of this interview.

How old were you when [name] passed away?

Were you a student at [school] when [name] passed away?

How did you find out that [name] had passed away?

Can you describe how you felt when [name] passed away?

Did you return home for a wake, funeral, or any other type of ceremony?

If so, how long were you away from campus?

If so, how did you feel when you returned to campus?

Is there anything else that you would like me to know about your bereavement experience?

Grief Process

We're now going to discuss the grief process. Again, grief refers to the emotions that are felt in the aftermath of the death. For this section, I'd like to focus on your experiences during college.

Did you have any expectations about what the grieving process would be like?

Do you think your family had any expectations about what your grief process would be like?

Do you think your friends had any expectations about what your grief process would be like?

We're now going to discuss some various methods of coping.

Did you talk or do you talk about the death with others?

With whom did/do you discuss your grief?

Did/do you find it helpful?

Did/do you spend time actively remembering good things about your loved one?

Did/do you find that helpful?

Did/do you find yourself avoiding things or activities that reminded you of your loved one?

Was/is that helpful?

Did/do you honor your loved one on special occasions? How?

How do you think that helped/helps you through the grieving process?

Did/do you try working on your grief by yourself?

What aspects of that did/do you find successful?

Did/do you try focusing on other things going on in your life?

Was/is that helpful?

Did you keep any belongings of the deceased?

If so, what did you keep and why?

Did/do you participating in any self-help groups or group therapy sessions?

If so, did/do you find these helpful?

Did/do you engage in any religious practices to help you cope?
In what ways did/do you find this helpful?

Did/do you try to keep busy while you were grieving?
Did/do you find this helpful?

Did/do you consult professional help to aid you in the grieving process?
If so, what kind of professional help?
Did/do you find this intervention helpful?

Where/are there any other methods that you used to help you cope with your grief over their bereavement?
Did/do you find these methods helpful?

What do you think was/is most helpful for you during your grief process?

Is there anything else that you would like to share about your grief process?

Recovery

We're now going to talk about the recovery process. Please keep in mind that grief can be a lifelong process and there is no correct way or time frame for the process of grief. Some of these questions may not be applicable to your current grief process, and if so just let me know and we will move to the next one.

Did/do you try to make sense of [name's] loved one's death?
If so, did/do you find that to be helpful?

Do you think there were/are any beneficial parts of the grief process?

At any time in your grieving process, do you feel that your identity changed/was changing? If so, how?

Did/do try to find hope during this time?
What did/do you do to find hope?
Do you think that remaining hopeful helped/helps you?

College Setting

We're now going to discuss the college setting and how you think it plays/played a role in your grief process.

What kind of environment were you living in while you were grieving? (i.e. single dorm, double dorm, apartment, house, other)

Do you think living with peers makes it harder or easier to grieve? Why/why not?

Did you tell your roommates/housemates about the death of [name]? Why/why not?

How often did/do you discuss your grief with your roommates/housemates?

Did/do you ever feel as though you were discouraged from grieving in your living situation?
How so?

Did/do you feel as though you missed out on any social activities while grieving? What kind of activities?

Did/do you fall behind in your work or struggle to keep up with your academics because of your grief?

Did/do you receive any accommodations from your professors while grieving?
If so, what kind of accommodations?

Was/is it hard to find time to grieve?

Do you think there are any aspects of college life that made grieving harder than if you had been at home? If so, what?

Do you think there are any aspects of college life that made grieving easier than if you had been at home? If so, what?

Are there any programs or protocols that you wish [school] had for grieving students?

Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about your experience?

Thank you so much for completing this interview. I truly appreciate you taking the time to share your story with me. If you have any questions as well, please let me know. Again, thank you for your time.