Effects of workplace social support on the grief process

Lauren Christine Leger

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THE EFFECTS OF WORKPLACE SOCIAL SUPPORT ON THE GRIEF PROCESS

by

Lauren Christine Leger

B.A. University of Montana, 1998

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Chairperson

Dean, Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

Recent research has attempted to identify factors that may contribute to a bereaved individual's grief recovery. Grieving persons may experience subtle societal messages to refrain from expressing their grief to others. Very few organizations implement formal personnel policies to aid bereaved employees' transition back into the workplace after the death of a family member. Therefore, organizations may not be sensitive to the issues surrounding grief and consequently may be hindering these grief processes. Supervisors, coworkers, and employees may need to provide additional forms of grief support; however, these coworkers may be unaware of the types of social support a bereaved coworker needs and from whom.

Previous research has shown that a general climate of support greatly facilitates the resolution of grief. There are many definitions of social support as well as typologies attempting to identify the specific acts of social support. Barrera and Ainlay's (1983) typology provided the basis for this project's interview questionnaire. Seven types of workplace social support were analyzed and compared: 1) Private feelings, 2) Material aid, 3) Advice/guidance, 4) Positive feedback, 5) Physical assistance, 6) Social participation, and 7) Organizational policies.

Overall, participants responded that they believed the general atmosphere of their workplace to be supportive and helpful. Most participants stated that they received an adequate amount of each type of social support, and that the amount received seemed to match the amount they thought they needed of each social support type. Most participants indicated they could turn to either their supervisor(s) or coworker(s) for each type of social support and that they actually did this. Of the social support provided in the form of organizational policies, bereavement leave was indicated to be the most available, the most utilized, and the most helpful. Most participants could describe examples and situations in which they were and were not able to express their grief emotions at work. Participants' responses to emotion management questions indicated that both expression and repression of grief emotions in the workplace could be helpful, depending on the situation. While these results provide valuable information, the data was limited due to the small number of participants and workplace representations.

This research discovered that all forms of social support were regarded as helpful. Because coworkers within a workplace have varying degrees of relationships, the results of this project provide at least six types of social support from which to choose in their attempt to aid bereaved coworkers.
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The completion of this research truly is the culmination of many tears, much anguish, incredible joy, and hidden endurance. First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this project to my mother, Bonnie Lynn Campbell Leger, whom God took home prematurely in February of 1999. I entered into this graduate program with a clear idea of whom I was and what I wanted to accomplish in my two years only to have my ideal rearranged. Inspired by the many poignant conversations my father and I shared, I chose to completely alter my original path and dive head first into research that I knew would be so timely and helpful for others and most painfully, myself.

And so, I would like to acknowledge and thank those who have made this long road to recovery so successful and have consequently, I’m sure unbeknownst to them, shaped me into the person I’ve always aspired to be. First, to my father Arthur Leger, I love you so much and am so blessed to have your constant love and support. Without the foundation of our family and your emotional and spiritual strength, I know I would not have been able to accomplish this. A huge thank you to Dr. Sally Planalp. You have been incredibly understanding and supportive, and I can not fully express my gratitude for all you have done for me over the past 6 years. Thank you also to my thesis committee consisting of Dr. George Cheney, Dr. Cindy Garthwait, and Dr. Kaye Norris. It’s amazing what great minds are able to accomplish!

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Jeremiah 29: 11 – 13 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”
CHAPTER 1
RATIONALE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

RATIONALE

Every day thousands of people experience grief but are denied the opportunity to heal. Death, grief and bereavement will happen to all of us. The question, then, is not “if” but “when”? Currently, Americans are reacting to death, grief, and bereavement by trying to avoid the topic of death and dying or by trying to deny the existence of death. Our western society has placed an incredible burden on those of us who are left behind after a loved one has passed on. We are expected to conduct our family affairs, return to work, and continue on our way as though life has not drastically changed.

Wortman and Cohen (1989) analyzed grief literature and attempted to systematically identify assumptions that were most prevalent in our society a decade ago. Because of our reactions to death and dying, there has been a shift in the meaning of death and a subsequent, “deritualization in American society in the streamlining of mourning” (Barrera & Ainlay, 1983, p. 7). Barrera and Ainlay (1983) believed that people are not only mourning for less time than a century ago, but also that “…the rituals and displays that characterized mourning in the last century have given way to more and more cursory and unadorned behaviors” (p. 7).

Additionally, the course of bereavement is greatly influenced by the norms of the business world. While businesses do recognize the need for a bereavement period, they typically give limited time off for mourning, and even then only for certain losses. If one looks at organizational policies, they would find that most organizations appear to deny the emotional realities of death and grief. Research commissioned by the Workplace Task Force among 170 small, medium and large companies found that 88% of the employers offered bereavement leave and only 60% of the employers offered family or medical leave (1999). The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 requires
employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to "eligible" employees for certain family and medical reasons (U.S. Department of Labor). While this Act is a definite step in the right direction towards making allowances for workplace grief, it includes only those employees who must care for a child after birth, care for a spouse, son or daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition, or finally, care for themselves due to a serious health condition. It does not require employers to include those employees who have experienced the death of a family member. There are many other formal personnel policies that have the potential to be implemented within a company. AT&T is one of the few organizations in the country that has truly implemented an advanced policy system for dealing with death and dying issues through their Program/Policy to Support Employees on End-of-Life Issues (National Public Radio, 1999). AT&T has incorporated medical plans, which include hospice care, accelerated benefit options, a Survivor Benefit Package, Long Term Care Insurance, Bereavement Leave, and Personal Days. As one can see, formal leave policies have been implemented, but it is not so easy to observe the informal organizational practices that aid the bereaved individual's grief process.

**Grief**

Lenhardt (1997) found agreement in the literature that any time people experience a separation from someone or something that is important to them they will experience grief. Grief is a normal, universal experience repeatedly encountered throughout the life span. However, it is widely assumed in our culture that when a major loss is experienced, the normal way to react is with intense distress or depression and then with a quick recovery (Wortman & Cohen, 1989). In fact, if laypersons hold unrealistically narrow views of what constitutes normal grief response, they may have difficulty offering the appropriate forms of assistance to friends and family members who
are trying to cope with loss. Moreover, they too may hold assumptions about how one should react when a loss is experienced (Wortman & Cohen, 1989). The fact is that grief may be strong or weak, brief or prolonged, immediate or delayed, expressed or stifled. There appears to be considerable variability in the length of time it may take to recover from a loss, and some people do not ever seem to recover despite the number of years gone by. Because of this, recent research has attempted to identify factors that may contribute to grief recovery.

**Stifled grief**

Wortman and Cohen (1989) found that there are at least three common patterns for the adaptation to loss. Some bereaved individuals seem to progress through their grief process “right on track”. Other individuals appear not to show intense bereavement, either immediately after the loss or later in time. And still there are others who remain in a state of bereavement for much longer than would be expected by grief counselors. Regardless of the adaptation to the loss, it is assumed that a successful adjustment to the loss requires a duration of intense distress or “working through” the grief process. Implicit in this assumption is that if bereaved individuals attempt to deny either the loss or the feelings or thoughts about the loss, the process will ultimately be unproductive (Wortman & Cohen, 1989).

Within a relatively brief period of time, people are most commonly expected to resolve their loss and recover their earlier level of functioning. However, an individual confronted with the death of a family member may encounter a number of obstacles on the road to recovery. Widdison and Salisbury (1990) state that “The expression of grief is difficult for many Americans because grief is often accompanied by intense emotions and our culture does not encourage the free expression of intense emotion” (p. 299). They also report that most forms of personal and professional support were unhelpful
because they all wanted the bereaved person to recover as quickly as possible and resume their lives.

A caring society ought not incorporate within its death system — either formally or informally— thoughts, attitudes, behaviors, or values that communicate to bereaved persons inappropriate or unjustified messages such as: “Your loss was not really a significant one”; “You are not a person who should be grieving this loss”; “We do not recognize some aspects of your grief”; “Your grief is not acceptable to us in some ways”; “Your grief is in itself a symptom of psychic disorder or lack of mental health”; “Your mourning has lasted way too long”; “You are mourning in ways that are publicly or socially unacceptable”; “You should not continue to mourn inside yourself in these ways”; or “Your mourning should be finished and over with by now” (Corr, 1999, p. 17).

Sadly, bereaved persons in our society often receive these messages. Brabant, Forsyth, and McFarlain (1995) addressed the notion that having one's grief affirmed by others is an important component in the grief process. A person may be able to work through their process if they believe others think the loss justifies grief and that the bereavement process is appropriate.

Eyesemitian (1998) suggests in his research that “...in being less sensitive to the bereaved role, organizations promote stifled grief; that is, grief denied its full course...” (p. 470). Negative responses to the expression of grief may result in a split between the private experience of grief and the public expression. Subordinates, coworkers, and supervisors may contribute to the stifled grief of an individual if they do not openly encourage the expression of honest feelings or promote the expression of guarded feelings such as anger, shame, and guilt (Souter & Moore, 1990). When the need for grief expression is inhibited by one's social environment, the bereaved individual may then need to hide or suppress their grief emotions. The need to discuss the impact of the death on oneself with others and the need to maintain stable and harmonious social relations is often a source of conflict for bereaved individuals (Tait & Silver, 1989).
Emotion management

Currently, society frowns upon open displays of grief and has a "requirement of cheerfulness" that contradicts its simultaneous "requirement of mourning" (Wortman & Cohen, 1989). It is then likely that a grieving person may experience this subtle societal message and refrain from expressing their grief to others. So as to maintain harmonious relations with others, the grieving person may continue to hide the degree of grief from other members of their social group (Tait & Silver, 1989). Thus, the stigma that is associated with persistent difficulties following the loss may result in self-presentational strategies that are in line with societal expectations, resulting in a discrepancy between public expressions and private experiences of ongoing grief (Tait & Silver, 1989; Wortman & Cohen, 1989).

When our emotions do not conform to society's feeling rules, we attempt to amend the emotions, at least superficially, in order to avoid sanctions from others (Hochschild, 1979). Hochschild (1979) defined emotion work or emotion management as the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display. Hochschild (1979) conducted an exploratory study and asked respondents to characterize their emotion work by using a variety of active verb forms. Responses included, "I psyched myself up…I tried hard not to feel disappointed…I let myself finally feel sad" (p. 561). She further identified the various techniques of emotion work.

One is cognitive: the attempt to change images, ideas, or thoughts in the service of changing the feelings associated with them.

A second is bodily: the attempt to change somatic or other physical symptoms of emotion (e.g., trying to breathe slowly, trying not to shake).

Third is expressive emotion work: trying to change expressive gestures in the service of changing inner feeling (e.g., trying to smile, or to cry). This differs from simple display in that it is directed toward a change in feeling. It differs from bodily emotion work in that the individual tries to alter or shape one or another of the classic public channels for the expression of feeling (p. 562).
While emotion work refers more broadly to the act of evoking or shaping a feeling, "emotion suppression" can be injurious to a person's grieving process as they attempt to stifle or prevent feelings from occurring. Other conceptions of emotion management include the intentional efforts to convince others that one feels a particular emotion and efforts that are expressed through behavior (Wharton & Erickson, 1993).

Ekman (1984) depicts display rules as "the overlearned habits about who can show emotion to whom and when they can show it" (p. 320). The rules are the rights and obligations that govern emotional displays and may be explicit and highly formalized, or they may be relatively informal (Wharton & Erickson, 1993). In the grieving process such rules have the potential to cause problems when individuals find themselves masking their emotions. Display norms emphasize the masking of emotion, or emotional neutrality, and are frequently observed in a professional or business setting. Wharton and Erickson (1993) state, "These display norms are most likely to characterize roles in which workers seek to establish or convey their authority over the target of their emotion-management efforts. In these situations, such as between managers and subordinate or professional and client, workers' emotional displays are expected to be muted, and excessive emotionality of any kind is discouraged" (p. 467). However, professionals and others who are in the workforce are encouraged to mask emotion and submit to the pressures to exercise iron self-control. Maintaining the image of "being in control" can cause professional men and women to have setbacks in their grief process (Donnelly, 1986). This type of emotion suppression can lead to avoidance patterns that result in unreconciled grief. Wolfelt (1987) believes this occurs when bereaved persons do not allow themselves to have feelings and express them, or by a support system that does not encourage the expression of feelings (Hughes, 1995, p. 11).
Very few organizations implement other formal personnel policies beyond bereavement leave to aid the bereaved employee's transition back into the workplace. This information implies that organizations may not be sensitive to the issue surrounding grief and consequently may be hindering these grief processes. If bereaved people feel they must mask their emotions because of the implicit lack of support within their workplace, then their grief process may be unproductive, complicated, or stifled. This rationale produced the basis for my first two research questions in an attempt to address the relationship between perceived workplace social support and emotion suppression.

RQ1: In what situations are bereaved employees able to express their grief emotions and is the ability to express these emotions helpful?

Absence of grief

While most of us assume that those who have experienced a loss are grieving, we must take into consideration that there are those who do not experience intense grief and therefore, do not need to manage or mask emotion. In their analysis of bereavement recovery, Parkes and Weiss (1983) state, "We might suppose that people who avoid or repress grief are most likely to become disturbed a year later, yet this is not the case" (p. 47). Their review of grief recovery literature suggests that we must now acknowledge the possibility that a sizeable minority of people may come through the bereaved process relatively unscathed. On the other hand, Wortman and Cohen (1989) identified three attributions related to the absence of displayed grief. First, the person may be denying the loss. Second, the person may be too emotionally weak to initiate the grieving process. And third, individuals who fail to grieve may simply be unable to become attached to others. It seems that clinical psychologists and grief counselors are not in agreement as to what constitutes abnormal grief; therefore, there is a need to
question if bereaved employees were unable to express their grief emotions and the helpfulness of this.

RQ2: In what situations are bereaved employees unable to express their grief emotions and is this inability to express these emotions unhelpful?

Effects of social support

One of the best ways someone can start working towards healing is through communication. A general climate of support and acceptance greatly facilitates the resolution of grief. The need to discuss an event or one's responses to it with others has been linked to the need to receive validation or feedback from others indicating that these grief responses are normal and appropriate to the circumstances (Tait & Silver, 1989). Rogers' (1980) research on newly widowed employees indicates that the recently widowed must have access to caring people with whom they can share their concerns. All too often the recently widowed avoid expressing their grief because they will upset others. However, evidence indicates that socially supportive environments facilitate a positive response to a stressful life event such as the death of a loved one. In the absence of such environments, Brandt and Weinert (1981) found that the maintenance of personal and social functioning is difficult. Cohen and Wills (1985) believe that at a general level, one can posit that a lack of positive social relationships can lead to negative psychological states such as anxiety and depression, which are often by-products of grief.

Burleson (1990) finds a growing volume of research suggesting that support messages contribute significantly to feelings of well-being, acceptance, and control over events. When an ongoing need for social support is met, adjustment to a loss and grief acceptance may be facilitated in a number of ways. The most important of these ways is confiding in others (Tait & Silver, 1989). Confiding in others about the event or related concerns or difficulties can serve to clarify and convey relevant grief needs. There has
been much research to back up the idea that positive relationships with significant others foster self-reliance and the ability to persevere in the face of obstacles and distractions (Sarason et al., 1983).

In his research of the negative effects of informal support systems, LaGaipa (1990) found that little systematic research has been done to determine the kinds of advice that are most appropriate for different kinds of people with different kinds of problems (p. 125). Truly, in order for social support to be effective, it must be appropriate to the particular needs or difficulties experienced by the bereaved individual. Rather than assuming that there is one ideal type of social support, we should research what for the bereaved individual is "good" social support.

**Social support defined**

While social support is defined in a variety ways by different theorists, it is typically defined as the existence and availability of others on whom people can rely and who let them know that they value and care about them (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). Shumaker and Brownell (1984, p. 13) defined social support as "an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient. Or we may choose Cobb's (1976) definition of social support as information that leads persons to believe they are loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations. And still other definitions include the exchange of material goods, services, emotional comfort, intimacy assistance, problem solving, and being enmeshed in a local community (Brandt & Weinert, 1981).

Regardless of how it is conceptualized, social support consists of two basic elements: 1) the perception that there is a sufficient number of available others to whom one can turn in times of need, and 2) a degree of satisfaction with the available support
Most social support researchers have focused their studies on identifying which members of the social network provide support, the forms of support provided by network members, and how supportive actions relieve or buffer the effects of environment stress (Burleson, 1990). Seers, McGee, Serey, and Graen (1983) emphasized the notion of social support as a coping mechanism that individuals would be more likely to use under stressful conditions. Once again, Tait and Silver's (1989) literature review reveals that the need for social support and discussion may frequently go unmet. If fact, while most researchers have assumed that support is uniformly positive in its effects on well-being, it appears that social responses to the expression of event-related difficulties or distress are often negative.

**Typologies of supportive behavior**

There is a tendency to think that there is one best form of social support for all types of stressful situations. Specific actions that one relational partner carries out on behalf of the other provides support, and this relational perspective is important because we expect that certain relational partners will engage in appropriate support acts. From this perspective, it is the specific acts of social support that actually provide the support, and hence this recognition has led to more microscopic analyses of supportive behaviors (Burleson, 1990).

Perrin and McDermott (1997) described twenty-eight social support instruments by author, availability, length and item type, psychometric properties, and selected references and notes. While not an exhaustive list of instruments, they represent the broad spectrum of measurement tools currently available.

People assist one another in an astonishing variety of ways, and relationships serve many functions. Unfortunately this richness has been
mirrorred in the literature by a proliferation of terminology and a host of overlapping typologies, few of which have achieved widespread currency (Vaux, 1988, p. 17).

Because of this overlap, increasing attention has been given to uncovering the specific dimensions of social support. One attempt has been to examine the differential effect of four types of social support: esteem support, informational support, social companionship, and instrumental support (Erera, 1992). Cohen and Wills (1985) provide the following typology and definitions.

**Esteem support** is information that a person is esteemed and accepted. Self-esteem is enhanced by communicating to person that they are valued for their own worth and experiences and are accepted despite any difficulties or personal faults.

**Informational support** is help in defining, understanding, and coping with problematic events.

**Social companionship** is spending time with others in leisure and recreational activities. This may reduce stress by fulfilling a need for affiliation and contact with others, by helping to distract persons from worrying about problems, or by facilitating positive affective moods.

**Instrumental support** is the provision of financial aid, material resources, and needed services. Instrumental aid may help reduce stress by direct resolution of instrumental problems or by providing the recipient with increased time for activities such as relaxation or entertainment.

As would be anticipated, studies have also been conducted to identify typologies of helpful and unhelpful behaviors offered to the chronically ill and/or bereaved. Lehman and Hemphill (1990) classified helpful responses to those who were chronically ill into one of three broad conceptual categories, each of which were further subdivided (p. 567):

**Emotional support** included: 1) expressing love, concern, or understanding; 2) providing encouragement; 3) listening; 4) praising abilities; 5) including in social activities; and 6) presence ("being there").

**Tangible support** included: 1) assisting with daily activities; 2) making helpful accommodations; and 3) help from medical personnel.
Informational support included: 1) providing information about the disease or cure; 2) providing a philosophical perspective; and 3) providing coping strategies.

These typologies were then compared with findings from prior investigations of bereaved individuals and cancer patients. Of the above noted categories, emotional support, especially through expressions of concern, love, and understanding were regarded as the most helpful (Lehman & Hemphill, 1990).

Similar research by Goldsmith (1992) summarized behaviors of others perceived as helpful and unhelpful by cancer patients, bereaved persons, multiple sclerosis patients, and individuals undergoing a fearful experience. Behaviors regarded as most helpful by bereaved persons included: mere presence, involvement in social activities, opportunity to talk/ventilate, direct expressions of love/concern, reassurance/encouragement, advice, contact with similar others, religion, complimenting deceased, and providing practical assistance. Behaviors acknowledged as the most unhelpful included: rude/insensitive remarks, saying “I know how you feel”, minimization, forced cheerfulness, advice, encouragement from recovery, unwanted tangible support, and interference (p. 272).

The diversity of measures of social support is matched by the diversity of conceptualizations concerning the ingredients. Weiss (1974) distinguished six dimensions of social support including attachment, social integration, reassurance of worth, reliable alliance, guidance, and opportunity for nurturance. Barrera and Ainlay (1983) found six similar categories of social support in their review of ten key articles that described the content of social support functions.

1. **Material Aid**: providing tangible materials in the form of money or other physical objects.

2. **Behavioral Assistance**: sharing of tasks through physical labor.
3. **Intimate Interaction**: traditional nondirective counseling behaviors such as listening; and expressing esteem, caring, and understanding.

4. **Guidance**: offering advice, information, or instruction.

5. **Feedback**: providing individuals with feedback about their behavior, thoughts, or feelings.

6. **Positive Social Interaction**: engaging in social interactions for fun and relaxation.

Barrera and Ainlay’s (1983) typology is advantageous in that “...it captures many of the distinctions explicit or implicit in discussions of social support and the descriptions of each category clearly identify the kinds of activities that constitute that mode of support” (Vaux, 1988, p. 21). This typology provided the basis for Barrera’s (1981) Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviors and was the foundational typology for my questionnaire.

The following research questions explored each type of social support within Barrera and Ainlay’s (1983) typology. For the purposes of this project, an additional type of workplace social support termed organizational policies has been added. Therefore, research questions 3-7 were employed to the original typology and research questions 5-7, 8, & 9 were employed to social support through organizational policies.

RQ 3: If bereaved employees need social support, who did they believe they could turn to?

RQ 4: Who did bereaved employees actually turn to?

RQ 5: Do bereaved employees want more or fewer opportunities to receive workplace social support?

RQ 6: How much do bereaved employees think they need workplace social support?

RQ 7: How helpful was the workplace social support they received?

RQ 8: What company polices are available to bereaved employees?

RQ 9: What company policies were actually used by bereaved employees?
Whether or not comments are rated as helpful is unaffected by bereavement status (Range, Walston, & Pollard, 1992). Those who either have or have not lost a loved one agree on which statements are helpful and which are unhelpful (Range et al., 1992, p. 30). However, there will be those helpful behaviors that may cross over to the unhelpful category and vice versa. Remarks by coworkers may be innocent, but they can be very painful for the bereaved. Because of a suppressed approach to mourning maintained by our society, a coworker who wants to say something but is afraid of the bereaved individual's reaction may often think the proper thing to do is to distract the mourner from their grief (Donnelly, 1986).

**Work-related social support**

Research on social support declares informal support among family and friends to be most valuable, but we must consider that the majority of bereaved people spend significant amounts of time at work. Because of this we can argue that what occurs in the workplace may make a considerable difference in the outcome of bereavement. Of course, the largest amount of support for the bereaved often comes from family and friends (Thuen, 1997). However, Fischer (1982) found that work was the most important source of non-kin relationships among those who were employed. Most mental health professionals agree that the workplace can provide a valuable social network, especially for those who have lost a spouse (Campbell, 1990). Brabant et al. (1995) discovered in their research of parents who have lost children that for the majority of those parents who worked, the workplace was supportive and the bereaved parent was able to accept the support. While I have not discovered other research or literature to distinguish the benefits of workplace social support to the benefits of personal social support, I make speculations upon which my research questions and hypothesis are based. Coworkers will offer varying degrees of support based upon their own personal loss experiences,
their closeness with the grieving employee, and their own individual capabilities (Lattanzi-Licht, 1999).

Several studies have addressed social support in the workplace and overall perceived organizational support (Ganster, Fusilier, & Mayes, 1986; George et al., 1993; Kirmeyer & Lin, 1987). Support includes information that leads a person to believe that he or she is cared for and loved, esteemed and valued, and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation (Cobb, 1976, p. 300). Researchers investigating the workplace have recognized social support and the related concepts as core dimensions of organizational climate (Kirmeyer & Lin, 1987). George et al. (1993) studied effects of organizational and social support for nurses dealing with AIDS patients and discovered that perceptions of high levels of social support within the organization resulted in the nurses thinking that their organization would provide them with the resources needed to cope with work-related stress. Resources that were identified included time off from work, the possibility of reassignment to another unit if stress levels became too great, and counseling services. It is important to comment here that these resources, while providing social support to the bereaved, are not required by government mandates and are based on the organizational climate of the company. Hence, unlike social support from family and friends, coworker support is restrained by the organizational norms established by the administration.

Considering that there are six different types of social support being analyzed for this research, organizational members should employ at least one, if not several, of the elements of social support. However, organizational members may not be aware of which classification of support will be most helpful because current social support literature is primarily based upon non-work situations. Subsequently, social support provided within the private domain may be very different and may not be relevant to the workplace. As a result of this rationale, I posit that certain types of social support will be
more helpful than others in aiding an employee's transition back to work as well as their grieving process.

Because people spend so much time at their workplace, I assumed that employees have developed friendships and therefore, sharing private feelings with other coworkers will be very helpful. Additionally, statistics show that many bereaved employees lose their jobs within a year of their family members' death. Based on these statistics, I believed many bereaved employees would be very concerned about their job security, and therefore, would find positive feedback about their work performance very helpful. Much of mainstream literature addresses the importance of providing bereavement leave to employees when an immediate family member passes on. For obvious reasons, such as funeral preparation and attendance, many employees greatly need a formal policy allowing them the time off.

Hypothesis 1: The most helpful types of workplace social support to a bereaved employee will be sharing private feelings, positive feedback and organizational policies.

Based on my own personal experiences and the shared experiences of others, I believe that advice, physical assistance, and social participation would be moderately helpful to bereaved employees. Advice and guidance from other coworkers has the potential to be helpful, but like any advice, it is only deemed worthwhile if the advisor has had a similar experience. Depending on the bereaved employee's grief process, employees may not need a lot of physical assistance within their workplace. Because the grieving process is highly individualized, employees may or may not experience a loss of energy and/or concentration. Subsequently, receiving physical assistance may only be moderately helpful. Finally, as previously mentioned the grieving process is unique and there may be differences among bereaved employees desires to spend time with other coworkers.
Hypothesis 2: Moderately helpful types of workplace social support to a bereaved employee will be advice, physical assistance and social participation.

While sympathy cards and flowers may certainly be welcomed and appreciated, I do not believe that this type of material aid would be as helpful as the previous six types of social support. These types of sympathy gifts are short-term items and most likely would not greatly affect employees' grief process. Furthermore, if additional material aid is offered such as money, I anticipate there would be rare cases in which bereaved employees express a need for this type of material aid or that they would accept this type of material aid from their coworkers.

Hypothesis 3: The least helpful type of workplace social support to a bereaved employee will be material aid.

Of all the possible sources of social support, those sources from the workplace, especially the supervisor, are most important in affecting stress (Ganster et al., 1986). Social support from one's supervisor appears to have a beneficial impact on the mental and physical welfare of workers, and should be encouraged (Ganster et al., 1986). Repetti (1987) found similar findings in her research reporting that "...there is an enhanced psychological significance to social interactions with supervisors compared with interactions with coworkers" (p. 717). In contrast, Blau (1981) and LaRocco et al. (1980) have reported that social support from co-workers results in about twice as many effects on workers' well-being as did support from superiors. Social visiting or companionship may in and of itself be a source of social support in the workplace regardless of the provider. Cohen and Wills (1995) stated that talking about nontask-related concerns on the job might enhance the perceived supportiveness of interpersonal relations. It seems that additional research in this area is needed to
understand the role of social support in the workplace and to understand the most
effective means of providing and demonstrating organizational support.

If we can accept that certain types of social support will more helpful than other
types of support, then it is also safe to speculate that certain types of social support
would only be helpful and valuable to employees if received from the appropriate
sources. Similarly, I have hypothesized the most helpful source of the social support for
each of the types. However, because of the scarcity of research based upon each of the
types of social support, I have made educated guesses grounded in my own
experiences and reasoning.

I believed employees would feel most comfortable turning to coworkers of the
same status within an organization to share their private feelings. Sharing with a
coworker may be less threatening to an employee because there may be a fear of job
security with a supervisor or a loss of professional face with a subordinate. When
expressing their emotions, employees may be more likely to interact with a peer
because there may be less fear of future repercussions or loss of face. For example, if a
teacher returns to work after the loss of his spouse and needs a moment during work to
share his sadness, there may be greater potential to turn to a fellow teacher rather than
the principal. Consequently, for the hypothetical teacher, the expression of private
feelings may be more helpful with a workplace peer than a supervisor.

**Hypothesis 4:** Sharing private feelings will be more helpful with coworkers
than supervisors or employees.

Unlike the sharing of private feelings, I believe receiving material aid in the form
of money or other tangible goods will be more helpful from supervisors, because they
are the personnel within an organization deemed to have the most access to tangible
resources. If an employee needed a monetary bonus to help pay hospital bills or funeral
fees, the supervisor or manager would appear to be the coworker most likely to aid in this area of social support.

**Hypothesis 5:** Receiving material aid will be more helpful from supervisors than coworkers or employees.

Because I did not differentiate between workplace advice and grief guidance, I believe that this type of social support will be helpful from all coworkers. One may speculate that advice and guidance related to an employee's transition back to work would be most helpful from coworkers and supervisors because these coworkers may have shared and related experiences to draw from. On the other hand, if an employee received guidance and advice based on the grief process, this type of social support has the potential to originate from anyone within the organizational hierarchy who has also experienced a loss.

**Hypothesis 6:** Receiving advice and guidance will be helpful from supervisors, coworkers or employees.

When an employee decides they are ready to return to work after the death of a family member, they may still be grieving and so may have difficulties engaging in their job. Many side effects of grief include mild depression, decreased concentration and anxiety, and bereaved employees may not be aware they are exhibiting these symptoms. Because a supervisor is typically the person required to give routine feedback and the bereaved employee may already be comfortable with this channel of feedback, I hypothesized that feedback from this source would be the most helpful.

**Hypothesis 7:** Receiving positive feedback will be more helpful from supervisors than from coworkers or employees.

As previously mentioned, bereaved employees may have difficulty returning to work and productively engaging in their jobs. Therefore, I felt that bereaved employees
would need physical assistance within their workplace and regardless of this source, it would be helpful. Physical assistance within the workplace may include returning phone calls, facilitating meetings and running errands.

Hypothesis 8: Receiving physical assistance will be helpful from supervisors, coworkers, and employees.

Because I believed friendships are more available with others of the same workplace status, I hypothesize that participating socially with others from work would be more helpful with coworkers than supervisors or employees. This belief was based solely on limited personal experience and on the theory that “birds of a feather flock together.” Davis and Todd (1985) state that friendships consist of two individuals participating in a mutual and reciprocal relationship. In this relationship the two “are inclined to provide each other with assistance and support, and specifically, to count on each in times of need, trouble, or personal distress” (p. 19).

Hypothesis 9: Social participation will be more helpful with coworkers than supervisors and employees.

And finally, formal and informal policies are significant components of workplace social support. While ideally one hopes that their organization will be proactive and have formal bereavement policies in place to offer a bereaved employee, this is not always the case. Regardless of the formality of the policy, I believed that providing employees with the opportunity to take bereavement leave would be the most helpful policy an organization could offer. This belief was based upon a review of mainstream literature suggestions for employers to make bereavement leave a priority in formal organizational policies.
Hypothesis 10: Bereavement leave will be more helpful than any other type of organizational policy.

**Negative effects of intended social support**

Recent research has also clarified instances of ineffectual and negative support (LaGaipa, 1990). People readily turn to those in their social support systems during times of emotional need, but not all social interactions can be presumed to be helpful. Burleson (1990) indicates that unpleasant interactions may do more harm than pleasant interactions do good (p. 73). Studies of the bereaved report that they often are targets of comforting attempts and that they regard these attempts as insensitive and unhelpful (Burleson, 1990; Lehman et al, 1986). "Support is sometimes discussed as the perfectly matched provision of resources to needs, but the matching of support to the real needs of a person is often not done effectively in real life. While a behavior offered by others and intended to be supportive may be seen as helpful by the recipient if provided at the right time, it is nonetheless unhelpful if provided at the wrong time" (LaGaipa, 1990, p. 124). Some research suggests that the more intense emotional experiences call for responses quite different from those used to manage everyday emotional upsets and may sometimes require the intervention of professionals (Burleson, 1990, p. 68-9).

While unhelpful social support certainly has the potential to negatively effect a bereaved employee's grief process, the possibility of being ignored by other coworkers can be even more devastating. Rogers (1980), in her analysis of recently bereaved employees, reported that the bereaved commonly describe three types of unhelpful responses from their coworkers. The first is when other coworkers are so hesitant about what to say that they either completely withdraw or wait for the bereaved person to initiate conversation. The second occurs when the grieving person is bombarded with advice to help "make it all better." And finally, people often forget to ask the bereaved how they are feeling or what would be helpful. Friends and coworkers may wrongly
assume that because of an illness the death was expected or that the bereaved is coping well because of outward appearance (Rogers, 1980). When supportive attempts like these occur, it is difficult for the bereaved individual to understand that others have trouble knowing what to say. Often, others remain silent rather than risk saying something that might increase the grieving person’s pain. Regardless of employees’ role within an organization and their choice means of providing social support, this project explored workplace social support in an attempt to provide employers and coworkers with further guidance. Bereaved employees must cope with the loss of a loved one, and coworkers and management have the potential to help.

Currently many organizations and their employees are struggling with issues of grief in the workplace. As employees address the management of their own grief process, their supervisors, coworkers and employees have opportunities to either help or hinder the bereaved coworkers’ progress as well. Social support researchers have presented a variety of support typologies in an attempt to define and categorize supportive behaviors. Because work-relationships often differ from personal relationships, there is a need to further distinguish and differentiate workplace social support from other classifications of social support. Additionally, the review of literature supports further research of the effects of workplace social support on the grief process. Methods for this research are discussed in the next section.
CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH METHODS

The goal of this study was to investigate and explore the different types of social support provided to employees in their workplace after an immediate family member passed on and to assess satisfaction levels with that support. All data were gathered through a semi-structured interview format to allow for both a quantitative and qualitative analyses. The research questions all focused on social support in the workplace but each question addressed separate elements of workplace social support.

Procedures

Originally I focused my target sample on working adults residing in Missoula County who had lost an immediate family member to terminal illness within the last two years. My goal was to interview a total of fifty participants in order to have statistically accurate findings. I initially attempted to locate participants by contacting the following organizations and support groups:

- Partners in Home Care (Hospice Bereavement Support Group)
- Families First ("Seasons" Family Grief Support and Education – sponsored by Families First, the University of Montana, and Hospice)
- AARP (Widowed Person's Service)
- The Missoula Demonstration Project
- Garden City Funeral Home Bereavement Support Group
- American Cancer Society Cancer Support Group
- The Compassionate Friends Support Group for Parents who have lost infants
- St. Patrick Hospital
- Community Medical Center
- Missoula AIDS Council
- The University of Montana Counseling Services (Bereavement Support Group)

I requested that either the support group facilitator or I present the research information. Additionally, I contacted major employers in Missoula County in order to request permission to include information on the research project in employee newsletters,
company newsletters, and organizational memos. Very few organizations accepted my request. Research flyers and advertisements were also posted in various locations throughout Missoula. Similarly, I placed several classified advertisements in the Missoulian newspaper, the Independent newspaper, and the University of Montana Kaimin.

Across the next several months I received very few phone calls even expressing an interest in my research project. Concluding that my criterion may have been too narrow, I spoke with my thesis committee and we determined that I should open the study to working adults who had lost an immediate family member within the last two years regardless of the cause of death. Once I expanded the inclusion of other causes of death, I received a greater number of volunteer participants and so was able to then complete my data collection.

The large number of research volunteers learned of my thesis project through church bulletins. I contacted all churches listed within the Yellow Pages of the US West Dex in hopes of requesting congregational volunteers through their service bulletins or weekly announcements. I received an overwhelmingly positive response and consequently, five out of twenty-six participants were contacted in this way.

Additionally, I was able to secure permission to send a mass e-mail to all Deans, Directors and Chairpersons of the various departments across campus. I briefly explained the purposes of my study and requested that they forward my information to their employees throughout campus. Within two days I received over 20 e-mails offering either personal availability to meet for an interview or providing me with names of coworkers or friends who fit the criteria. More than half (n = 15, 58%) were either university employees or had an affiliation with the university.

Combinations of qualitative and quantitative procedures were used to yield the most comprehensive data. Self-report instruments, presented in interview and
questionnaire forms, were the primary measures of support. Very few researchers have attempted to use observational assessment of support, although some have used a behavioral log approach (Vaux, 1988). To date, the individual participant has been the major source of social support data, and Leavy (1983) believes that this is a "...serious shortcoming in the support literature (due to) the reliance on retrospective designs. Retrospective data can be suspected of considerable reporter bias due to selectivity or deficient memory" (p. 16). Nevertheless, retrospective data collection is unavoidable and even preferable for some topics, including grief. For this research project in particular, I was specifically interested in bereaved individuals' biased perceptions of helpful and unhelpful social support. Because data collection may be too hard and too intrusive at the time of the family members passing, retrospective data collection was vital to determine what types of social support left lasting impressions with the participants.

Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, a flexible research design was needed. Therefore, I chose to incorporate qualitative data gathering methods as well as quantitative analysis (structured interviews in questionnaire form). While I felt I needed to gather quantitative data to increase the validity and reliability of my results I also wanted to provide employers with real-life examples of ways to promote a socially supportive environment. I believe the balance between the two methods gave a richer picture of the phenomenon and also enhanced the rapport and trust between me and the participants, which is needed for researching loss and grief. It seemed to me that of all the people who phoned me and expressed interest, those individuals who were willing to meet with me for an interview wanted to share their work experiences and wanted me to listen to them. If I had simply put an answer key in front of them and asked them to indicate the number that best represented their answer, I would have invalidated their
grief experiences. I would have behaved in the exact opposite of the social support research I was attempting to promote.

Regardless of whether the questions were quantitative or qualitative, I encouraged participants to elaborate at any time during the interview. I believe many of the participants had never considered my subject before, and it seemed as if they welcomed the opportunity to work through their feelings and experiences. Consequently, tape-recording and then fully transcribing the interviews were very beneficial to capture this qualitative data.

All data were gathered during a single 1 — 1½ hour audio-taped interview session. All but three interviews were held on campus in the back room of the Communication Studies graduate office in room 339 of the Liberal Arts building. The three interviews not held in LA 339 were conducted in the UC Copper Commons, on a bench along the university oval, and at a local restaurant. Because all interviews were voluntary and audio-taped, each participate was required to read my cover letter and sign two copies of my consent form (see Appendix A & B). For each interview, I read the questionnaires to the participant and asked them to give their best answer. For questions requiring a Likert number scale answer, I provided the participant with an answer key sheet.

**Safeguards**

Traditionally, ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of informed consent, right to privacy, and protection from harm. Because building trust and rapport with participants was a priority, a number of safeguards were used. Every attempt was made to maintain the confidentiality of all participants and to provide substantial professional aid to minimize the emotional risk of participation. The Missoula Demonstration Project, a federally funded organization researching end-of-life issues,
provided me with a manual that highlighted key information to ensure successful interviews. In addition, I closely followed an article written by Colin Murray Parkes, a well-known researcher of bereavement issues, that outlined guidelines for conducting ethical bereavement research (Parkes, 1995).

Both a cover letter and consent form were given to potential participants to request their involvement and to establish an initial interview time (see Appendix A & B). Signed consent forms were collected and given directly to my thesis advisor, Dr. Sally Planalp, and remained in her locked office for the duration of the study. It was the participant’s choice to determine if he or she would like other members of their support group or organization to know of their involvement with the study. Because I was not analyzing the adequacy of social support within a given organization, names were not included on any interview transcriptions or questionnaire forms. Finally, referral resources were available to participants if emotional issues arose from the interview process.

Because I was not allowed direct access to bereaved individuals, I was required to wait for potential participants to phone me to set up an interview. I received many phone calls, but often the potential participants did not return my calls or failed to attend the scheduled interviews. When this occurred, I often called them as a follow-up or tried to reschedule an interview for a later date. However, I was extremely careful in my attempts to establish an interview time in that I wanted to make it perfectly clear that the potential participant could refuse my request and would not be called again. Approximately 10 out of the 40 who contacted me ultimately did not choose to participate in my study. While none of them gave me explicit reasons for their choice, I got the impression that many of them thought the interviews might release negative feelings and memories.
Frequently when an individual phoned me to obtain further details about my research, they asked why I had chosen this topic of study. I always informed them of my mother’s death in 1999 and explained the lack of research I discovered in this area of social support in the workplace. While I am sure this personal disclosure had the potential to bias the study, I believe participants were more willing to participate knowing I could relate to many of their experiences. During the interviews however, I was careful to remain objective while responding empathetically. I never revealed my personal experiences during the interview, and I attempted to remain neutral by managing my own emotional reactions.

After all data were gathered and analyzed, I included the most detailed and representative quotes from the interview transcription. Because participant consent was required for each quote I chose, I phoned or e-mailed the participants to request their mailing addresses. I then mailed each participant a copy of the quote(s) I wished to include a consent form and a self-addressed stamped envelope (see Appendix C). Participants signed the consent form and returned it in the self-addressed stamped envelope.

Participants

Participants included 5 adult men and 21 adult women who had lost an immediate family member within the last two years and were working at the time of death and/or our interview. A time limit of two years was chosen because within grief research literature a year is deemed to be the typical length of the grieving process. Because a one-year time limit may have been too soon for a bereaved individual to feel comfortable sharing their experiences, I chose to extend the criterion another year. Ganster et al. (1986) state that an ideal sample for research of social support would represent a range of personal and work setting characteristics as opposed to context-
specific research. Therefore, the only condition participants were required to fulfill was that they were currently working in an organization with at least one other employee, and it was preferable but not mandatory that the individual was working with the same organization as when they experienced the loss.

Of the twenty-six participants, twenty-one (81%) were female and five (19%) were male. The ages of the participants varied between 18 and 55 years old and additionally, a variety of family relationships were represented (see Appendix D). The length of time in months passed since the family member's death was calculated by determining the number of months since the date of death and the date of the interview. From the date of their interviews, nine participants' family members passed away within six or less months, six participants' family members passed away between six and twelve months prior, five participants' family members passed away between twelve and eighteen months prior, and six participants' family members passed away between eighteen and twenty-four months prior. There were three main causes of death indicated: 1) cancer (n = 9, 35%), 2) accidental (n = 6, 23%) and 3) heart attack (n = 4, 15%). Seven participants' family members died due to other circumstances such as natural causes, suicide, and homicide. Twenty-one participants (81%) indicated that their family member did not live in their homes at the time of death, and sixteen participants (61%) stated their family member did not live in Missoula County at the time of death.

Of the twenty-six participants, six worked as administrative support, four were administrators, three were educators, three were self-employed, two were health care professionals, and the remaining eight were from a variety of professions. A variety of workplaces was also represented however, seventeen (65%) of the participants were employed by the university system. The other nine participants came from an assortment of organizations.
Interviews

Arizona Social Support Interview Schedule (ASSIS; Barrera, 1981)

Measures based on supportive categories should be utilized to determine if specific supportive behaviors are predictive of satisfactory adjustment of certain individuals under certain life conditions (Barrera, 1981). Barrera's (1981) Inventory of Socially Supportive Behavior (ISSB) is a forty-item scale generated to assess social support. As a measure of supportive behaviors, the ISSB was not designed to provide information concerning the people who supplied resources or the individuals' subjective appraisals of the adequacy of support (Barrera, 1981). Therefore, Barrera (1981) designed the Arizona Social Support Interview Schedule (ASSIS) to measure these facets of support (see Appendix E). In the ASSIS, six support functions form the basis for questions that were used to elicit names of network members:

1. **Material Aid**: providing material aid in the form of money or other physical objects.
2. **Physical Assistance**: sharing of tasks.
3. **Intimate Interaction**: interacting in a nondirective manner such that feelings and personal concerns are expressed.
4. **Guidance**: offering advice and guidance.
5. **Feedback**: providing individuals with information about themselves.
6. **Social Participation**: engaging in social interactions for fun, relaxation, and diversion from demanding conditions (Barrera, 1981, p. 75).

Barrera (1981) reports reliability and validity information about the ASSIS scale as follows:

Test-retest correlations showed that total network size was a stable indicator ($r[43] = .88, p < .001$)....The support satisfaction measure suffered from a markedly skewed distribution that favored high satisfaction scores. A moderate test-retest correlation ($r[43] = .69, p < .001$) and low internal consistency (coefficient alpha = .33) were obtained. The support need measure demonstrated good test–retest reliability ($r[43] = .80, p < .001$) and moderate internal consistency (coefficient alpha = .52) (p. 76-77).
In concrete terms, this means that estimates of the number of people who provided support during the past month were highly stable (.88), that estimates of how many opportunities respondents would have liked to receive support were moderately to highly stable (.69), and estimates of how much respondents thought they needed social support were also highly stable (.80).

For lack of exact descriptions of what was meant by internal consistency, it is taken here to mean consistency among the 6 measures of social support (material aid, physical assistance, intimate interaction, guidance, feedback, and social participation). When respondents were asked how many opportunities they would have liked to receive of each of those types of social support, their answers were low in consistency (alpha = .33). When respondents were asked how much they needed social support in each of the six categories, their answers were moderate in consistency (alpha = .52). On the whole, reliability is sound, and internal consistency might be thought of as questionable. For lack of any reason to believe that respondents should want or need the same levels of social support in all six categories, however, internal consistencies seem acceptable.

Because this framework and original wording of the ASSIS was utilized in a study involving pregnant adolescents it was necessary to adapt the scale and wording to reflect social support in the workplace. To do so, a seventh category labeled organizational policies was added to account for the social support provided by the organization as a whole.

The ASSIS (Barrera, 1981) was chosen because it captured a range of behaviors and activities found in social support typologies. However, the ASSIS (Barrera, 1981) was somewhat limited in that the ultimate goal of the interview was to assess the participants' social support network and their satisfaction with and need for support. Therefore, a fifth question was added to the interview schedule to assess the helpfulness of the social support received from each coworker within the participants'
network. For example, how helpful was it to talk about things that were personal and private with each person from whom you received the support?

Questions 1 and 2 of the first six types of social support requested the participants to identify the organizational members who could (Question 1) and who did (Question 2) specifically serve supportive functions. For this research project, the names of network members were not as important as the positions the members held in the organization. Therefore, participants were asked to provide only the job title or description of their network members.

For each of the six categories, I again followed Barrera's (1981) format in questions 3 and 4 to rate the participants' support satisfaction and need. The ASSIS's qualitative indices of support satisfaction and need were based on the same six support categories that were used to identify network members (Barrera, 1981, p. 76). For each mode of social support, the questions followed a consistent sentence structure and answer key. Participants were asked to use Likert scales for rating their satisfaction with the support they received and how much they needed that support (see Appendix E). As previously mentioned, a fifth question was added to all seven of the types of social support to specifically assess the helpfulness of the type of social support the participant actually received from each organizational member identified.

The seventh added type of social support, organizational policies, attempted to assess what formal and informal organizational bereavement polices were available (Question 1) and which polices were actually used (Question 2). Questions 3, 4, and 5 were identical in format to the previous six types of social support and attempted to assess the same indices.
**Emotion management questions**

Four open-ended questions were asked in order to assess the bereaved individuals' emotion management or suppression. For this research, I was unable to determine when a bereaved individual was engaging in emotion management or suppression, and therefore, I needed the individual to honestly describe their perceptions and thoughts of the situation. Additionally, I was interested in the expression and repression of grief emotions as it occurred up to two years earlier. I believe this method was the most valuable in analyzing if stifled grief (emotion and grief suppression) occurred (see Appendix F). These questions allowed for a wide variety of themes and categories to arise, and subsequently, I was able to code and categorize responses after all the data were transcribed.

In my questionnaire, these emotion management questions followed the demographic questions and preceded the ASSIS (Barrera, 1981). However, within the first several interviews participants expressed some difficulty remembering situations or moments in which they believed they were or were not able to express their emotions in the workplace. Consequently, I decided to first ask the demographic questions and altered the section sequence to then go into the social support questionnaire, followed by the emotion management questions. By asking participants to reflect on each section and type of social support, it was much easier for me to transition into the emotion management questions. Additionally, the participants were better able to remember examples as they were more engaged in the interview process and the topic.

**Additional questions**

At the closing of the interview a series of questions was posed to briefly assess the social support the participants received outside of the workplace. Question 1 of the "wrap-up questions" attempted to determine if the participants perceived their workplace
environment as helpful or unhelpful. Question 2 asked the participants to address the differences between the social support received in the workplace and the social support received outside the workplace. This question was open-ended to allow for descriptions and explanations of the possible differences. Questions 3 and 4 asked participants to identify sources of support outside of the workplace and to assess how much support they have received from each one. There were two purposes for these two final questions. First, I wanted a way to broadly determine how much the participant might have relied on workplace social support. For example, if a participant listed seven other sources of social support outside the workplace, I assumed that their need for workplace support might not be as great compared to those with limited sources of support outside of work. Second, I wanted to provide the participant with an opportunity to reflect on their sources of outside personal support in case, through the course of the interview, they discovered they were unhappy with their workplace support. Finally, the last question of the interview provided participants to share anything that was not included in the interview. I felt this opportunity was necessary because I believed that many participants came to the interview with preconceived ideas about my research and had formulated ideas long before our meeting. Therefore, this final question explicitly permitted the participants to add new information or to elaborate on thoughts expressed earlier.

Data analyses

All results were a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Questions 1 and 2 of the first six types of social support requested the titles of those in the workplace that could supply the specific type of social support (Question 1) and did supply the specific type of social support (Question 2). Answers for both of these questions were categorized as supervisors, coworkers, subordinates, or other. Question 2 in all social
support types had a follow-up question requesting examples of the specific type of social support received. Answers to question did not fall into clear categories. Data obtained from questions 3 and 4 for all seven of the types of social support were based on a respective 4-point and 3-point Likert scales respectively. The fifth question for each type of social support asked the participant to assess the helpfulness of the social support provided from each person or policy that they identified in question 2. Again, data obtained from this question were based on a 5-point Likert scale rating helpfulness.

Because of the low number of participants, the power of the statistical analysis was limited. For example, power for a t-test (d = .5 medium effect size, alpha = .05, n = 26) was .55, but often was much lower due to many respondents finding many questions “not applicable” (for example, they turned to no one for material aid). Power for correlations (r = .30, alpha = .05, n = 26) was .45, but the same problem with “not applicable” answers was common. As a result, it was important to include qualitative data to supplement the quantitative responses.

All interviews were transcribed in order to derive common themes. The transcriptions took an average of approximately 2 hours to transcribe and were five pages long. Transcriptions were based on the content of the interview and did not include paralinguistic cues. After each interview had been transcribed, I reviewed the content to begin my open coding. For each story, example, and description, within each section of the interview, I created and recorded a phrase to identify the passage and the transcription code and page number in which the phrase could be found. For those passages that were especially detailed or reflected a common theme, I highlighted the coding phrase and corresponding code and page number so they could be referenced in my results. After all interviews were transcribed I again reanalyzed my qualitative data to determine if common themes arose. If an example or description was mentioned two
or more times, I determined it to be a theme worth reporting. The results of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses are presented in the next section.
CHAPTER 3
RESULTS

An overview

Most participants were able to provide examples of situations or moments at
work in which they were able and others in which they were unable to express their grief
emotions. If participants believed they were able to express their emotions, many found
this to be helpful for a variety of reasons. Participants responded openly and in general
found the social support within their workplace to be helpful and adequate.

In terms of coping with their loss, most participants stated that the general
atmosphere of their workplace was helpful; however, the support they received within
their workplace was different than the support they received outside of their workplace.
Also, most participants indicated they received additional help from outside of their
workplace with most receiving the greatest additional support from their family and
friends.

Emotion management questions

Ability to express grief emotions

When respondents were asked if they could recall and describe any situations or
moments at work in which they believed they were able to express their emotions, most
participants gave several examples. Of the collection of examples, four common themes
emerged. First, four out of twenty-six participants stated they were able to express their
emotions the first day they returned to work after their family member had died. One
participant stated, “When the phone rang when I first came back in the afternoon it just
kind of brought some things back. I started to break down and that’s when one of the
coworkers came in to offer support...The first time things are hardest to work through.”
The second theme emerged as participants shared their ability and willingness to express their grief emotions but only with specific people within their workplace. Two participants explained why they believed emotional expression was only appropriate with certain individuals. One participant, a teacher, explained to his students, "I'd say, 'You all know what's going on and why this is difficult for me but I'm just going to continue on the best I can. I hope you'll accept this. That was really helpful too...it wasn't like I had the students there to support me, but I felt like the support was there if I needed it". The other participant, a nurse, explained, "I'm not very good at expressing my emotions among people that are not my close friends."

Third, three out of twenty-six participants believed they were able to express their emotions due to the sympathetic and supportive environment of their workplace. Two participants provided examples of times when they were allowed to take a break if their emotions overwhelmed them. "Just the biggest thing is knowing that it was OK if I was having problems at first being at work and need a break..."One participant described a situation in which she was having difficulties interacting with her customers. "And he [her boss] could see I was having just a little bit of trouble and so he told me to go back and take whatever time I needed. And so I went back there (in the lounge) to sit. And just to be able to do that for a minute and shed a few tears pulled me back together."

Finally, three participants provided examples related to the fourth emergent theme. These participants described their grief emotions as spontaneous and uncontrollable. Therefore, the ability to express their emotions in the workplace was necessary for their grief process. All three participants shared that they never felt they had to hide or suppress their emotions from their coworkers. "It [grief] always came up spontaneously through some conversation that we were having or just something. But I never felt self-conscious about it. I never felt I needed to hide it." Another participant stated, "I never gave it a thought. In other words, basically it was the bereavement
process and I sat down and let it sink in and got it out of my system. Think about it occasionally and that's about it. And if it was at work or not, it didn't really make a difference. If I wanted to express myself, I would."

The remaining responses fell into a variety of categories including examples of coworker conversations, crying during lunch hour or a coffee break, and relying on work as an emotional escape. Several participants mentioned they did not want or need to express their grief emotions within the workplace. "It's kind of like when you go through that you find the people that you need to talk to, and so I really didn't need to [express my emotions]. I didn't have a dependence on people at work for that."

Helpfulness of emotional expression

Of those participants who revealed an ability to express their grief emotions at work, all stated they believed it was helpful for them to do so. "It just was more important than I would've predicted it would be - To feel that [support] from my coworkers." Of the answers provided to the question of why they believed emotional expression was so helpful, four themes arose.

First, two participants shared the difficulties of controlling their grief emotions. "I don't think it's good to hide what's going on in you and, like I said before, the waves [of emotion] just come over you and you can't control the emotion you're going through and the tears. Somebody will say something. I remember coming back to work and people were laughing and I was like, how can they laugh? I am so sad. How can they laugh? But they don't know."

Second, two participants believed that emotional expression was necessary for them because they believed the grief would manifest itself in other ways if not expressed. When asked why it was helpful for her to express her grief emotions, one participant replied, "Because if I'm feeling bad I don't like to keep anything inside. It's
kind of like if there's something buried in there; it's nice to get it out because if not, it could come out in other ways. I could get a headache, get sick or whatever.”

Three participants felt it was very helpful for them to express their emotions because they all had desires to share their emotions with others. One participant provided an explanation as to why she felt the need to express herself. “Being a woman where our emotions and relationships are so important, where men are more work oriented, it's not as important to them and they have a harder time expressing themselves. They keep them [emotions] in. I think it's when there are problems of any kind, I think it's vitally important to find someone and get them out. I think it's key. I can’t live without it.” The fourth theme reflected two participants' desires to express their grief emotions to others who shared similar experiences and who were able to be empathetic. “It was helpful to find out that other people felt the same way I did when they lost their loved ones too.”

Finally, other participants shared a variety of additional reasons why they found emotional expression helpful. Several participants briefly mentioned the helpfulness of having a safe and supportive working environment. “Everyone that I would have been emotional with or had talked with around me wanted me to do or to go as far as only I wanted to go. They never pressured me into talking about it or talking more about it than I wanted to.” A university employee shared similar sentiments regarding his workplace. “I think what was most helpful was the fact that I didn’t feel as though I had to hide my emotions at work. I didn’t feel that I had to pretend that I was “up” if I wasn’t. So it’s not so much the overt expression in terms of being able to cry or talk or whatever it was, though I could've. Just knowing that it was safe for whatever was going on at the time. That was the big part.”
Inability to express grief emotions

Most of the participants were able to recall and describe situations or moments at work in which they believed they were unable to express their emotions; however, many did not find this to be a negative experience. Three themes emerged from the transcriptions to describe different situations and reasons why the participants believed they could not express their grief emotions.

Five participants shared with me that they did not feel that the workplace is a suitable environment for the expression of grief emotions. Within the workplace there is a need to maintain a professional role especially when interacting with others. One participant described a situation in which she was “feeling kind of down and in tears but of course you don’t do it [express emotions] then because you have to be professional.” Another participant, reflecting her thoughts on workplace grief suppression, remarked, “It’s just the nature of how the day goes. That’s how you start the day.” The second theme reflected three participants’ belief that work is a welcome distraction from their grief. Work allowed them to set aside their grief emotions and focus on other things. “But I do find that when I’m busy, I’ve got so much to do when I’m busy, that thinking about work, I don’t really think about the other part [grief].”

The final theme mirrored two participants’ descriptions of an unsupportive workplace environment in which other coworkers did not acknowledge their grief process. “It’s been five months now [since her mom died] and just later on down the line it seems like nobody would want to talk about it or ask about it. The first couple of weeks they would ask if I was all right yet and I didn’t know. There would be this implied feeling that I wasn’t supposed to talk about it anymore, especially several months later. I felt I was unable to express what was going on.”

Other participants described a variety of situations that did not fall into common categories. One participant explained that she did not feel comfortable expressing her
grief emotions but that was a reflection of her personality and characteristics. Another participant worked in an office in which all of her coworkers and many of the customers knew her family member that had passed on. She stated her inability to express her emotions was the result of a bombardment of sympathetic patrons. “Because it was constantly brought up and you’ve got five minutes to say whatever to each customer and it got really, really hard sometimes. So that would be a time when I wasn’t really able to express but then again, I didn’t want to.” Similarly, another participant shared “You don’t realize how long this is going to affect you. After say about a week or two, you’d be in the middle of work and you’d have a customer and this thought flashes through your mind. And you’ve got to keep yourself together during that time, when all you really want to do is sit down and have a good cry.”

**Helpfulness of emotional nonexpression**

When asked whether they believed the suppression of grief emotions to be helpful or unhelpful, a wide range of answers and explanations was given. Two participants believed that working and being at work was helpful to them. “When I go to work it’s so instantly absorbing that I forget anything. I’m there and this is work.” Another participant shared, “But I am also glad that I do work because it does make you get up everyday and get going.” Others shared their belief that bereaved employees need a balance within the workplace and the freedom to progress through their individual grief process. “For me, I deal with things the way I deal with things. That’s not the kind of thing you can plan. It just happens. That’s about the only way I can suggest that anybody can [deal with their grief]. I mean you can’t just throw yourself at somebody. You kind have to just pick up what they want to do. And that’s something I’ve tried to do and that’s something that has been done for me. They are going to let me do what I need to do.”
The following section reveals the results of the Arizona Social Support Interview Schedule (Barrera, 1981). The quantitative results to the seven workplace social support types will be presented as well as the qualitative data describing examples of each of the types of social support that were provided.

The Arizona Social Support Interview Schedule (ASSIS; Barrera, 1981)

Private feelings

The majority of the participants when asked if they wanted to talk to someone at work about things that were very personal and private believed they would talk to their supervisor(s) (n = 16, 62%) and their coworker(s) (n = 18, 69%). (The findings of quantitative analyses covering private feelings are found in Appendix G.) Only four participants (15%) stated they would turn to an employee. Of the people participants stated they would turn to, the greatest majority of them actually talked about things that were personal and private with their coworker(s) (n = 20, 77%) followed by their supervisor(s) (n = 14, 54%). Examples of social support provided by the sharing of private feelings included a variety of descriptions but one category emerged from the data. If participants shared their private feelings with another person within their workplace, several expressed the importance of emotional connecting with others who had similar experiences. One participant shared, "[A coworker] I work with lost her father about five years ago, and I knew that and I guess her father and my step-father were very similar. So we've shared several conversations about just what I'm feeling on a very personal (level) and especially around the holidays, how to cope and to deal with everybody together for the first time. She was very helpful."

Most participants (n = 18, 69%) believed they were provided with an adequate number of opportunities to talk with people about their personal and private feelings. Five (19%) would have like a few more opportunities and three (12%) would have liked a
lot more opportunities. All of the participants thought they needed people to talk with about things that were personal and private. Seventeen (65%) thought they needed these opportunities a little bit and, nine (35%) thought they needed these opportunities quite a bit.

Of those participants who actually talked with their supervisor(s) about things that were personal and private (n = 15), almost half (47%) believed this to be very helpful and a third (n = 5, 33%) believed this to be pretty helpful. Of those participants that actually talked with their coworker(s) about things that were personal and private (n = 20), just over half (55%) believed this to be very helpful and twenty percent (n = 4) believed this to be pretty helpful. Of the five participants who spoke with their employees, four (80%) believed this to be very helpful.

**Material aid**

When asked who were the people they knew at work that would lend or give them something that was useful such as a physical object or money, the majority of the participants believed that their supervisor(s) (n = 21, 81%) would do so. (The findings of quantitative analyses covering material aid are found in Appendix H.) About half as many believed their coworker(s)(n = 10, 39%) and employee(s) (n = 9, 35%) would lend them or give them something useful. Of the people the participants indicated actually provided this types of social support, half (n = 13) received material aid from their supervisor(s) and half (n = 13) received material aid from their coworker(s). Eight participants (31%) indicated their employee(s) gave or loaned a useful object and seven participants (27%) indicated that material aid was provided from other sources. Of the participants who did receive this type of social support, material aid was provided in the form of sympathy gifts, symbolic gifts, and some sort of financial aid. Sympathy gifts included examples of cards, flowers, care packages, and books. One participant
received a symbolic gift from her office. "They all took donations and planted a tree with a memorial plaque on campus for him [her son] too, and it happens to be right outside my window at work so I can watch it grow."

A great majority of the participants (n = 22, 85%) stated that they would have liked people to have loaned or given them a little more material aid; however ten (39%) participants indicated that they thought they did not need material aid at all. Eleven (42%) participants indicated they thought they needed material aid a little bit and four (15%) participants needed material aid quite a bit.

Of those participants who received material aid from their supervisor(s) (n = 14), over half (n = 8, 57%) believed it to be very helpful, four (29%) believed it to be pretty helpful, and two (n = 2, 14%) believed it to be moderately helpful. Of the fifteen participants who received material aid from their coworker(s), the majority (n = 12, 80%) believed this aid to be very helpful. Of the eight who received material aid from their employee(s), the majority (n = 6, 75%) believed this aid to be very helpful. Finally, of the eight who received material aid from other sources within the workplace, half (n = 4) believed this aid to be pretty helpful.

Advice/Guidance

When asked who they would go to at work if a situation came when they needed some advice, the majority of the participants indicated they would turn to their supervisor(s) (n = 17, 65%) or their coworker(s) (n = 20, 77%). (The findings of quantitative analyses covering advice/guidance are found in Appendix I.) Only three (12%) would turn to an employee and seven (27%) would turn to a source outside of the immediate office. Of the people participants indicated they would turn to for advice or guidance, most participants actually received advice and guidance from their coworker(s) (n = 12, 46%) and their supervisor(s) (n = 9, 35%). Additionally, participants
indicated they received advice from an outside source (n = 4, 15%) and only two (8%) received advice from their employee(s). Most of the advice and guidance the participants received reflected either work-related advice or grief-related advice. If the advice was grief-related, several participants expressed the importance of receiving it from others who have gone through similar experiences and losses.

The value of time and personal feelings during the grief process were common themes. One participant provided an example of her supervisor’s advice, “Just take one moment at a time, breaking things into smaller chunks. Don’t look at it as a whole day that you have to get through. If I can make it through the next customer then I’m going to take a break.” Another participant explained the importance of having her coworkers validate her grief emotions and provide guidance of how to cope. “She can sit down and say, ‘You’re right. It’s really, really terrible. There’s nothing good about it.’ It’s more a validation on her part... It’s probably validation of my sense that this has some really terrible parts to it. Maybe that’s what it is. It’s validation and a way of somebody from outside picking it apart and saying, ‘Don’t feel bad that you feel bad. This is really a terrible situation and you should feel bad.’

Most participants (n = 21, 81%) indicated they received an adequate amount of advice and five (19%) expressed they would have liked a little more advice. Just over half of the participants (n = 14, 54%) indicated they needed the advice a little bit. Seven (27%) indicated they needed advice and guidance quite a bit and five (19%) did not need any advice.

Of the nine participants who received advice and guidance from their supervisor(s), just over half (n = 5) found the advice to be pretty helpful and three (33%) found the advice to be very helpful. Of the eleven participants who received advice and guidance from the coworker(s), seven (64%) found the advice to be pretty helpful and three (27%) found the advice to be very helpful. Two participants received advice from
their employee(s) and indicated this advice to be pretty helpful (n = 1) and very helpful (n = 1). Finally, four participants received advice and guidance from other sources and three (75%) indicated this advice to be very helpful.

Positive feedback

When asked to identify the people at work that they could expect to let them know how they were doing at work, the majority of the participants indicated that they could expect their supervisor(s) (n = 21, 81%) and their coworker(s) (n = 17, 65%). (The findings of quantitative analyses covering positive feedback are found in Appendix J.) Seven participants (27%) could expect their employees to give them feedback and five participants (19%) could expect an outside source to give them feedback. Most of the participants actually received work-related feedback from their supervisor(s) (n = 16, 62%). Ten (39%) participants also received feedback from their coworker(s). Many of the participants received general feedback related to daily work performance, constructive criticism, and encouragement. One participant expressed difficulties maintaining her focus at work. "My supervisor would let me know if my concentration would waiver, and she did it in a very positive and supportive way. She sometimes would make the suggestion that I take a breath and just separate myself for a few minutes or however long it took me to get back into the swing of things." Another participant shared the feedback and support she received from her supervisor when she returned to work. "She said, 'Anything you get done we'll be happy with. If you can have a chance to get 'this and that' done by 'such and such' a date that would be great. If you don't, let me know and we'll reassign it. If you get more done that's great. Then I'll give you something else that will match your energy levels."

Additionally, four participants indicated they received no feedback at all based on false assumptions of the participants' grief process. "I think a lot of people just assumed
that I hadn't collapsed or folded like a house of cards that I was doing pretty well.”

Another participant expressed, “I didn’t really get [any feedback] and I guess maybe in the absence of that I assumed that I was doing fantastically. I think that you assume everything is good when maybe it’s not.” However, several participants expressed that they felt it was their responsibility to seek feedback about their work performance. One participant stated, “I think it would’ve been up to me to say something if I felt that I was having difficulty in my job...it sounds like I didn’t get a lot [of feedback] but it’s because I didn’t request a lot.”

A little over half of the participants (n = 15, 58%) indicated they received an adequate amount of feedback. Seven (27%) of the participants would have like a little more feedback and four (15%) of the participants would have like feedback provided a lot more often. Seventeen (65%) of the participants expressed they needed to receive feedback a little bit and five (19%) of the participants needed feedback quite a bit. However, four (15%) participants stated they did not need feedback when they returned to work.

Of the sixteen participants who received feedback from their supervisor(s), nine of them (57%) expressed this support within the range of pretty to very helpful. Five (31%) participants found the feedback somewhat helpful and two (12%) participants indicated the feedback to be somewhat helpful and not at all helpful. Feedback received from coworkers varied in degrees of helpfulness. Ten participants received feedback from coworkers and five (50%) indicated this support to be pretty helpful to very helpful. The other five indicated coworker feedback as somewhat helpful to moderately helpful. Four participants received feedback; two of these came from their employees while the other two were from an outside source.
Physical assistance

When asked who were the people at work that they could call on to help them take care of something they needed to do, the majority of the participants believed they could call on their coworker(s) \( n = 22, \ 85\% \) and their supervisor(s) \( n = 17, \ 65\% \). (The findings of quantitative analyses covering physical assistance are found in Appendix K.) About half of the participants indicated they could call on their employee(s) \( n = 12, \ 46\% \), and only seven participants would turn to an outside source \( n = 7, \ 27\% \). Most participants called on their coworkers for physical assistance \( n = 16, \ 62\% \). Many participants indicated that a great majority of the physical assistance they received occurred immediately following the initial discovery of the death and when they first returned to work. Common examples of the physical assistance that occurred after the initial discovery of the family member's death included making phone calls, rescheduling appointments, providing a ride to the airport, and taking over office work. Of the additional help provided when the participant returned to work, the most common examples given were of coworkers of hierarchical levels offering to take over shifts or providing any extra work help. One participant, a teacher, stated, "One day I came back [to work] and there was just too much stress. I got very anxious and...I just started to cry. So I went out of my classroom and my chairperson heard me...and she called in for a sub, which I thought was good because I couldn't complete the afternoon."

Nineteen participants \( 73\% \) indicated that they felt they received an adequate amount of physical assistance when they returned to work. Three participants \( 12\% \) would have liked a little more help, and three participants \( 12\% \) would have liked a lot more help with things they needed to do. Just over half of the participants \( n = 14, \ 54\% \) indicated they felt they needed people to help them do things a little bit. Eight participants \( 31\% \) responded they felt they needed this type of support quite a bit, and four participants \( 15\% \) responded that they did not need this type of support at all.
Of the ten participants who actually received physical assistance from their supervisor(s), nine responded that they believed this support to be either very helpful (n = 5, 46%) or pretty helpful (n = 4, 36%). Of the sixteen participants who received physical assistance from their coworker(s), the majority (n = 13, 77%) indicated this type of support to be very helpful. Finally, of those participants who received physical assistance from their employee(s), seven out of ten (70%) indicated this type of help to be very helpful.

Social participation

When asked to identify who were the people they could get together from work to have fun or to relax, most participants indicated they could with their coworker(s) (n = 21, 81%) and supervisor(s) (n = 15, 58%). (The findings of quantitative analyses covering social participation are found in Appendix L.) Seven participants (27%) indicated they could get together with their employee(s) to have fun or to relax, and eight participants (31%) indicated they could with other people from their workplace. Of the people that participants indicated they actually got together with for fun and relaxation, most participants (n = 15, 58%) did so with their coworker(s). Ten participants (39%) indicated they actually got together with their supervisor(s) to have fun or to relax. Most of the examples given of social participation were categorized as informal after-work activities. Many participants received this type of social support from others when they were invited to go for a walk, to lunch, out for drinks, out for coffee and even on a camping trip. One participant expressed the helpfulness of talking with her coworker. “It was somebody [to talk to] who wasn’t related to you. That you could just say what you wanted to say. Like with my husband. Sometimes when we would talk he sees me this way, and so he will tell me that I took this really, really hard. And I’m thinking, ‘No, I haven’t.’”
Just over half of the participants (n = 14, 54%) responded that they received an adequate number of opportunities to get together with people for fun and relaxation, and ten participants (39%) would have liked a few more opportunities. Most of the participants (n = 16, 62%) thought they needed this type of social support a little bit, and six participants (23%) thought they needed social participation quite a bit. Four participants (15%) responded that they did not need this type of social support. One participant shared, "In the first six months after she [her sister] passed it was very difficult, and I didn't really want opportunities to get together for fun. Probably would've been helpful, but I just was pretty depressed about everything." Another participant shared similar sentiments. "But right after he died, I didn't want to see anybody. I didn't even want to go out of the house. I was in another world."

Of those participants who socially participated with their supervisor(s), eight indicated this type of social support to be very helpful (n = 3, 30%) and pretty helpful (n = 5, 50%). Of the sixteen participants who received this type of social support from their coworker(s), most found this to be very helpful (n = 12, 75%) and pretty helpful (n = 3, 19%). Several participants received this type of social support from their employee(s) and/or other people within in their workplace, and most found this to be pretty to very helpful.

Organizational policies

The majority of the participants indicated that bereavement leave (n = 22, 85%) and counseling (n = 16, 62%) were available to help them cope with their loss and eventually return to work. (The findings of quantitative analyses covering organizational policies are found in Appendix M.) Additionally, eleven (42%) participants indicated their organizations provided arrangements for flextime. Only two (8%) participants' organizations provided formal substitute help and only three participants' organizations
(12%) provided vacation pooling. Ten participants (39%) mentioned other policies beyond the ones given in the questionnaire. Of the formal and informal policies organizations provided, the most utilized was the bereavement leave (n = 20, 77%) followed by flextime (n = 8, 31%) and counseling (n = 7, 27%). Having policy options available, especially bereavement leave, was very important to most of the participants. "It really put my mind at ease because the job is my support. So I did not need to be in a situation in which I'd be worrying about whether I was going to have a job, not have a job or whatever, my hours being cut. So it made quite a bit of difference."

A great majority of the participants (n = 19, 73%) believed the number of policy options was just about right for them. Three (12%) participants would have liked a few more policy options and three (12%) participants would have liked a lot more policy options. Twenty (77%) participants indicated that they needed bereavement policy options quite a bit while three (12%) needed them a little bit and three (12%) did not need them at all.

Of the twenty-one participants who took bereavement leave, nineteen (90%) indicated this option was very helpful. Of the six participants who were given flextime, all of them indicated this as very helpful. One participant received substitute help and indicated it as very helpful. Of the seven participants who received bereavement counseling, five (71%) rated this policy as very helpful and two (29%) rated this policy as pretty helpful. Seven participants received additional policy options. Five (71%) rated this additional options as very helpful and two (29%) rated these as not at all helpful.

The next section reveals the results of the wrap-up questions to assess the general helpfulness of the participants' workplaces and to uncover the described differences in the social support the participants received within the workplace and outside of the workplace. Finally, quantitative analyses present data to uncover who
participants have received help from outside of the workplace and the amount of help
and grief support received from each outside source.

Wrap-up questions

When asked, in terms of coping with their loss, if the general atmosphere of their
workplace was helpful or unhelpful, twenty-two (85%) of the participants stated that the
general atmosphere of their workplace was helpful. When asked to describe the
differences between the social support provided from people at work compared to
people outside of work, several themes emerged. (The findings of quantitative analyses
covering the wrap-up questions are found in Appendix N.) Five participants expressed
that their workplace support was more helpful than their personal support. Several
participants shared that they viewed their coworkers as family.

The people at work have been more helpful because they just know me
so much better. They’re the people that I deal with in a day-in and day-
out basis and they know the little twists and turns and they don’t ask
questions...the people at work know that I can just kind of come in and sit
down and they may say something about what’s new or whatever and
then I get to say something more. They just open the door...

On the other hand, three participants indicated they received much more support
outside of the workplace. One participant expressed that she found it easier to
seek support from her family. "It’s easier and much more comfortable especially
because we’re going through the same thing and have the same feelings of loss."

Two related themes describing the differences between workplace social support
and outside social support were also reflected in the transcriptions. Many participants
explained that there were a lot of differences between workplace and personal social
support but they believed that a balance of both was required. Some of the differences included one participant's explanation.

I think that the help I got from the people outside of my work was much more extensive and much more personal and much more intimate. Both were necessary and both were very helpful... I think the more support you get, the better it is. I think that even though I think I tend to compartmentalize work from the rest of my life, it provides some consistency and some balance.

When asked who they had received help from outside of their workplace and to rate the amount they have received from each person identified, all participants indicated at least one person outside of their workplace who provided them with grief-related social support. Nineteen participants indicated they received additional support from other family members. Of those nineteen participants, eleven (58%) received a great deal of grief support, four (21%) received some grief support, and four (21%) received a moderate amount of social support. Again, nineteen participants received additional support from personal friends. Of those nineteen participants, twelve (63%) received a great deal of support and four (15%) received some grief support from personal friends. Ten participants stated they received additional grief support from their church and most (n = 6, 60%) indicated they received a great deal of grief support. Three (30%) stated they received a moderate amount of support from their church. Eight participants participated in grief support groups and all of them indicated they had received a great deal (n = 6, 25%) and some (n = 2, 25%) grief support. Six participants received additional grief support from their neighbors. Three (50%) indicated they received some support; the other three indicating either very little, a moderate amount, or a great deal of support. Eight out of the nine participants who received additional grief support from their significant others indicated they received a great deal (89%). Nine participants
indicated they received grief support from other sources not listed and in a variety of amounts.

Quantitative and qualitative data analyses revealed that most participants believed their workplace atmosphere to be helpful and for the most part believed they received an adequate amount of each type of workplace social support. Participants were able to report which people they believe they could have turned to for each type of social support, as well as whom they actually did turn to. Finally, participants reported additional sources and amounts of social support they received outside of their workplace. Next, I turn to interpreting and discussing the overall pattern of findings in an attempt to transform the data into meaningful information for employees, coworkers, supervisors, and organizations.
CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Overall, participants responded that they believed the general atmosphere of their workplace to be supportive and helpful. Most participants stated that they received an adequate amount of each type of social support, and that the amount received seemed to match the amount they thought they needed of each social support type. Most participants indicated they could turn to either their supervisor(s) or coworker(s) for each type of social support and that they actually did this. Of the social support provided in the form of organizational policies, bereavement leave was indicated to be the most available, the most utilized, and the most helpful. Most of the participants could describe examples and situations in which they were and were not able to express their grief emotions at work. Participants’ responses to the emotion management questions indicated that both expression and repression of grief emotions in the workplace could be helpful, depending of the situation.

Emotion expression and repression

Eyesemitan (1998) suggested that “organizations have the potential to promote stifled grief; that is, grief denied its full course…” (p. 470). Souter and Moore (1990) believed that individuals within an organization might complicate an employee’s grief process if they do not openly encourage the expression of honest feelings. Based upon this possible connection of emotional expression and the grief process, I posed the four emotion management questions in an attempt to discover when bereaved employees believed they were able and were not able to express their grief emotions.

Based upon my communication education and my own personal experiences, I originally believed that bereaved employees would find the expression of their grief
emotions within the workplace to be helpful and the repression of their grief emotions in
the workplace to be unhelpful. However, because I could not find a means to collect
data that would accurately reflect the association between emotional expression/
repression and the grief process, I was unable to generate a formal hypothesis.
Surprisingly, the data reported on emotion management was contrary to my informal
hypothesis in that most participants reported situations and moments in which they could
and could not express their grief emotions, and both ends of the emotion expression
continuum were labeled as helpful.

Kennedy-Moore and Watson (1999) analyze the goals and traits associated with
the three types of emotional expression, which are 1) expression, 2) nonexpression, and
3) a mixed pattern of emotional behavior. As is reflected in the data results section,
participants reported a variety of situations in which they were able to express their grief
emotions, in which they were unable to express their grief emotions, and in which they
also addressed the importance of the contextual cues in determining their emotional
expression.

Several examples were provided as evidence of which situations bereaved
employees were able to express their grief emotions. Many respondents reported that
they were able to express their emotions when they first returned to work, which seems
very natural and normal. It would seem that others within the organization would be very
sympathetic and understanding and be tolerant of their coworker's grief expression.
Several participants reported that they never felt a need to hide their emotions, and
several other participants were able to express their emotions due to the sympathetic
and supportive environment of their workplace. Other participants took brief breaks
during the lunch hour or on a coffee break in order to express their grief. As earlier
mentioned, I was not surprised that many participants indicated that they found the
ability to express their grief emotions in the workplace to be helpful. Participants
expressed their difficulties in controlling their grief emotions and the belief that if not expressed, the grief would find other ways to escape. Several participants indicated that they had desires to share their emotions with others in the workplace. Kennedy-Moore and Watson (1999) define this expression as intimacy. "Communicating our feelings to others is a way of letting them get to know us" (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999, p. 96).

Evidence was given to provide examples of situations in which bereaved employees were unable to express their grief emotions. Several participants indicated that they did not feel that the workplace was a suitable environment for expressing their emotions and that they needed to maintain a professional role within their organization. These findings are consistent with Wharton and Erickson’s (1993) belief that emotional masking frequently occurs within the workplace, especially among professional men and women. This form of nonexpression may be a means of achieving emotional control (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999). “This goal is held by people who value appearing calm and unemotional at all times and especially in their interactions with others” (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999, p. 97). While this type of nonexpression can lead to unreconciled grief, evidence of this effect was not indicated. Only two participants shared that they believed their workplaces were not supportive and did not allow for emotional expression. Additionally, several participants indicated specific personality traits and situations that did not warrant emotional expression.

Many participants indicated that suppressing their grief emotions at work was helpful for them because work provided a welcome distraction from their grieving. Several participants shared that work was what got them up in the morning and prevented them from being emotionally overloaded with grief. In her research, Campbell (1990) discovered that among teachers, the constant demands and the fast pace of a school day were reported as aiding them through a personal crisis. This finding was also reflected among my participants as well.
A need for balance of emotion expression and nonexpression was indicated by many of the participants. Most acknowledged the benefit of emotional expression; however, they also acknowledged that there was a need to manage the appropriateness of the expression. Again, Kennedy-Moore and Watson (1999) mention a trait of self-monitoring that is associated with a mixed pattern of emotional behavior. Of course, self-monitoring is essential in most workplaces as an individual may come in contact with a variety of people and take on a variety of roles and responsibilities throughout their workday. And for each situation, different emotion rules and display norms will be in effect. Almost all of the participants indicated that they worked in environments that allowed for the expression and repression of grief emotions. I did not sense that any of the participants worked for organizations that demanded constant self-monitoring and emotion management. Based on this presumption, I theorize that many of the participants felt in control of their emotion management options and therefore, found both emotion expression and repression helpful. Regardless of whether or not bereaved persons express their grief in the workplace, I believe that bereaved employees, at some level, may need to communicate their grief emotions to receive social response and support. The likelihood of effective support may be a direct function of the individual's ability to communicate openly with others about the event and/or event-related difficulties (Tait and Silver, 1989).

The effects of workplace social support

Bereaved employees bear the largest responsibility to regain functional workplace abilities and integrate painful losses, but the need to communicate about the loss with others within the workplace is also essential (Tait & Silver, 1989). Verbal and nonverbal acts of social support greatly contribute to employees' feelings of well-being, acceptance, and control over events (Burleson, 1990). In general, people who perceive
a lack of support from others within their workplace are more at risk for poor outcomes following a loss (Lattanzi-Licht, 1999). As discussed in the literature review, there are as many definitions of social support as there are typologies to identify behaviors that constitute social support. In addition, certain types of social support that are crucial to one person and situation may not be important to others. This chapter continues with a discussion of the results of each of the seven types of social support and the corresponding research questions and hypotheses.

**Private feelings**

The data reported that most of the participants believe they could turn to their coworker(s) and their supervisor(s) if they needed to talk about things that were personal and private. Of the people within their workplace, most participants (77%) actually turned to their coworker(s) to share their private feelings and about half (54%) indicated they turned to their supervisor(s). Research conducted by the Workplace Task Force of the Last Acts Campaign (1999) on end-of-life issues in the workplace reported similar findings. "The large majority of caregivers – nine in ten - told either their boss or their co-workers about their situation...Those who talked to co-workers seem to have done so in the context of normal friendly, collegial relationships. Some seem to have been seeking informal support" (p. 35). These findings are not surprising in that relationships with coworkers may be easier to form because of perceived status equality and a closer proximity of workspaces. Additionally, a common theme presented in the qualitative analyses is the sharing of feelings with others whom have experienced similar situations. Francis (1997) suggests that the best informal support may come from those who have had similar experiences because they are the most likely to understand the sufferer's definitions of loss and grief.
Results indicated that most of the participants (69%) perceived that they received an adequate amount of opportunities to talk with others about their personal and private feelings. These results may be related to the participants' demographics in that many of the participants work in the university system and have had a long period of time to form and foster relationships within the workplace. Additionally, most participants (65%) thought they needed people to talk about things that were very personal and private only "a little bit," reflecting the participants' view of needing a balance of emotional expression and repression. Finally, in general, sharing private feelings with others, regardless of the coworker status, seemed to be within the range of "pretty helpful" to "very helpful."

**Material aid**

Little is mentioned in research literature regarding the effects of social support given as material aid. One may argue that our society is very much wrapped into material possessions and wealth. Subsequently, we are expected to express our condolences to a bereaved friend by buying them a card, baking a pie, sending flowers, or with similar material sentiment. Evidence indicates that socially supportive environments facilitate positive responses to a death; one element of which is material aid. However, after the death of a loved one, I was unsure if social support in the provision of financial aid and tangible resources would be of any importance to the employees.

Most participants responded that their supervisor(s) (81%) and coworker(s) (77%) would lend or give them something that was useful such as a physical object or money. Of the twenty-six participants, only half indicated that they were given or loaned some objects that they needed by their supervisor(s) or coworker(s). The majority of the participants (85%) stated that this amount of material aid provided was just right, and most of the participants indicated that they either did not need any material aid (39%) or
needed it only a little bit (42%). These results are consistent with similar research conducted with cancer patients, multiple sclerosis patients, individuals undergoing fearful experiences, and bereaved persons (Goldsmith, 1992). Among the supportive behaviors regarded as most helpful by these individuals, social support in the form of material aid was not included. However, in general, most of the participants that received material aid indicated this to be very helpful.

Advice/guidance

Upon returning to work after the death of a family member, social support provided in the form of advice and guidance can be related to the employee's grief process, the circumstances surrounding the family member's death, the employee's work performance and so on. As with any type of advice, some can be very helpful and useful, and some can be unsolicited and unwarranted. The parameters of advice and guidance were left undefined for this research project. Therefore, participants were free to comment on work or grief related advice or guidance.

Interestingly, most participants would first go to their coworker(s) (77%) followed by their supervisor(s) (65%) if a situation came up when they needed some advice. Similar findings were revealed when participants were asked which people actually gave them some important advice (coworker = 46%; supervisor = 35%). Similar to the sharing of private feelings, these results may also be a reflection of a bereaved individual's desire to receive advice and guidance from others who have been through similar experiences. Likewise, employees may also develop more intimate relationships with other employees of the same status and position within the organization, and therefore, they may turn to their peers for advice and guidance.

Most participants (81%) indicated that they received an adequate amount of advice and needed to get advice a little bit (54%) to quite a bit (27%). Of those
participants that actually received advice from their supervisor(s) or coworker(s), most believed that the advice and guidance they received was in the range of pretty helpful to very helpful. Previous research by Goldsmith (1992) summarized both helpful and unhelpful behaviors and listed receiving advice under both categories. It seems that the advice and guidance received by participants of this study reflected a positive viewpoint.

**Positive feedback**

Because social support in the workplace is such a new research field, little is known about the effects of positive feedback on the grief process. Of course, we have a great deal of information about the function of feedback in the workplace and how to give feedback to employees about their work output on a "normal day-to-day" basis. When an employee returns to work after the death of a family member, others in their workplace may be hesitant to provide feedback in fear of upsetting the employee even further. However, issues such as job security and financial difficulties make this area of social support vital to a bereaved employee.

Most of the participants stated that they expected their supervisor(s) (85%) and their coworker(s) (65%) to let them know how they are doing at work. However, only sixty-two percent of the participants received feedback from their supervisor(s), and only thirty-nine percent of the participants received feedback from their coworker(s). A little over half of the participants stated that they received an adequate amount of feedback, but the remaining participants indicated they would have liked people to tell them how they were doing at work at little more (27%) to a lot more often (15%). A great majority of the participants expressed that they needed to have people let them know how they were doing at work a little bit to quite a bit.

Based on these findings, it seems that most participants valued social support in the form of positive feedback but many did not receive as much feedback as they would
have liked or needed. Again, this may reflect our society's lack of knowledge of how to cope with grief. Coworkers may either be uncomfortable addressing issues related to grief in the workplace or may be ill-trained in handling grief in the workplace. Of those people participants indicated provided feedback, it seems that the most helpful feedback came from supervisors and of all the feedback received from all sources, this type of social support seemed to be moderately helpful.

**Physical assistance**

When a bereaved employee returns to work, their grief may seriously affect their concentration and energy levels, thus negatively affecting their work performance. Little things, such as making a phone call or picking up lunch, are often very difficult for a person who is grieving. Therefore, having others to whom they might turn for this type of social support may be very important to a bereaved employee.

Almost all of the participants indicated they could call on their coworker(s) to help them take care of something that they needed to do, and most participants actually did receive some sort of physical assistance from their coworker(s). Repetti (1987) stated, “...It is also possible that workers feel more emotionally vulnerable in relationships with supervisors because they are less able to influences and change those interactions or because of worries about job evaluations” (p. 717). This possibility may be reflected in these findings. Bereaved employees, already emotionally vulnerable within any relationship, may not risk asking their supervisor(s) for help in that they may not be willing to risk negative evaluations or feedback.

Most participants indicated they received an adequate amount of physical assistance when they returned to work, and most participants did express a need for people to help them do things. Overall, this type of social support was labeled as being within the range of "pretty helpful" to "very helpful" for bereaved employees. It should
also be noted that many participants expressed that although they may not have received a lot of physical assistance, knowing that others were available to provide it was in itself very helpful.

**Social participation**

Of the typologies reviewed with social support literature, all included some reference to or form of social participation. Cohen and Wills (1985) labeled this type of social support as social companionship, defined as spending time with others in leisure and recreational activity. Lehman and Hemphill (1990) included social participation under the conceptual category of emotional support. It seems that including bereaved persons in social activities "...may reduce stress by fulfilling a need for affiliation and contact with others, by helping to distract persons from worrying about problems, or by facilitating positive affective moods" (Cohen & Will, 1985).

The great majority of participants indicated that they could get together with their coworker(s) to have fun or to relax, and over half of the participants actually did get together with their coworker(s) to have fun or to relax. Most of the participants stated that they received enough opportunities to get together with others for fun and relaxation with many others wanting a few more opportunities. Additionally, most participants thought they needed this type of social support a little bit to quite a bit. Overall, social support in the form of social participation was regarded as "pretty helpful" to "very helpful."

**Organizational policies**

Organizational bereavement polices can easily be found in the personnel manuals for most organizations. Typically, most organizations offer bereavement leave to employees if an immediate family member has passed on (Workplace Task Force,
Some companies, like AT&T, have proactively implemented bereaved policies that include vacation pooling, flex-time, financial aid, and Survivor Benefit Packages. Because Missoula is a small city that is limited in the number of large organizations, many local organizations may not have the resources to provide formal bereavement policies. Therefore, I was very interested in researching both formal and informal policies that were offered.

Of the policies listed in my questionnaire, most participants indicated that bereavement leave and counseling were the most available company policies and programs to help them with their loss. While many participants indicated that their organizations provided bereavement leave, counseling, flex-time, and other options, only about a third of the participants took advantage of the options beyond bereavement leave. Considering that many of the participants worked within the university system, these results are not surprising. What is surprising is that the majority of the participants only used bereavement leave to help them handle their loss and did not use flextime or counseling. However, most organizations offer only three days for bereavement leave, and many of the participant’s responses reflected a great deal of flexibility within the duration of their bereavement leave. Employees were frequently given additional time-off beyond the formal policy and were also provided with additional leave if special needs arose at a later date.

While a significant amount of grief literature is pleading for organizations to increase and improve their bereavement policies, most of the participants indicated that they received an adequate amount of policy options. Also, of the policy options that were used, twenty participants (77%) thought they needed those polices “quite a bit”. Finally, for all of the organizational policies provided and employed, almost all were indicated as being “very helpful.”
Rogers (1980) reported that employment can be extremely important for widowed employees in adjusting to bereavement. Many recently bereaved people reported that work is their lifeline. It provides structure, distraction, a confirmation of usefulness, expectations to live up to, and social interactions (Rogers, 1980, p. 228). Of course, sources of social support are not limited to supervisors, coworkers, employees, and other organizational personnel; sources can also be family, friends, church, support groups, neighbors, and significant others.

**Other sources of social support**

It has been argued that because those who are employed spend a significant amount of time at work, workplace social support is of great importance to a bereaved employee. Brabant et al. (1995), Campbell (1990), and Fischer (1982) have all addressed the significance and value of workplace relationships and social support. However, one must address the possibility of bereaved employees receiving an adequate amount of social support from outside sources and therefore, not heavily relying on workplace social support to aid their grief process.

Most of the participants were able to describe the differences between the help and grief support they received from people at work and the help and support they received from those outside of their workplace. Lattanzi-Licht (1999) explained that workplace support will vary in degrees based on other coworker's personal loss experiences, their closeness with the grieving employee, and their own individual capabilities. Many participants explained that they believed the support they received within their workplace was more helpful than outside support. Several mentioned that their coworkers were like family, and because of this closeness, they knew each other on a more personal level. Many participants also expressed that they received more support outside of the workplace in the form of physical assistance and sharing private
feelings. Lastly, several participants did not describe differences but stated that they believed that there was a need and a balance to have both workplace and outside social support. This last description seems to reflect the following results.

Most participants indicated that they received a great amount of additional grief support from their family and friends with many participants receiving a combination of support from other listed sources. These results may be interpreted as being positive because all of the participants received social support from outside sources and did not rely solely on workplace social support. When an ongoing need for social support is met, adjustment to a loss and grief acceptance may be facilitated. Considering that most of the participants indicated that their workplace environments were generally helpful, one may question whether this is a result of workplace social support, outside social support, or a combination of both.

Social support comparisons

Comparisons of helpfulness

Similar research on social support provided to bereaved individuals and cancer patients conducted by Lehman and Hemphill (1990) found emotional support, especially expressions of concern and understanding, as more helpful than tangible and informational support. Additionally, research indicates that one of the most important ways of facilitating an adjustment to a loss and grief acceptance is by confiding in others (Tait & Silver, 1989). The evidence that is presented in the results supports the first hypothesis that sharing private feelings will be one of three types of social support to be the most helpful. This is indicated by the number of participants (n = 20) who actually talked to another person within their workplace about things that were personal and private and the percentages of those participants who found this type of social support to be either pretty helpful or very helpful. Based on the following statement by Lattanzi-
Licht (1999), it seems likely that positive feedback would also be one of the most helpful types of workplace social support.

Several human responses to loss are commonly manifested in workplace settings. These include exhaustion, withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, depression, or irritability. The inability to concentrate, the tendency to make mistakes, and decreased motivation or interest are all common grief-related symptoms. A major loss can undermine a bereaved person’s coping abilities and can interfere with social and occupational functioning. Previously effective employees may become less able to perform their required activities (Lattanzi-Licht, 1999, p. 20).

However, results of this project indicate that for the participants who actually received feedback from their supervisor(s) and/or coworker(s), this type of social support was regarded as moderately to pretty helpful and rarely as very helpful. Thus evidence to support hypothesis one that positive feedback will be one of the most helpful types of workplace social support was not produced.

While most corporate policies only allow for three days of paid leave at the time of an immediate family member’s death, I believed that the availability of any type of organizational policy would be one of the most important types of workplace social support. Evidence for this segment of the first hypothesis was found. Of all the organizational policies presented in the questionnaire, bereavement leave and flextime were the policies that most of the participants used. Overwhelmingly, these polices were also regarded as being very helpful. All but five of the participants took bereavement leave, and it seemed that most of the participants were able to take much more than three days off after the death of a family member. This may reflect the perceived helpfulness of bereavement leave.
In this study, only about half of the participants actually received advice or guidance from another person within their workplace. Of those who received advice or guidance, more participants indicated this advice was needed a little bit and was pretty helpful. These results provide evidence in support of my second hypothesis that workplace social support in the form of advice will be moderately helpful.

Many participants indicated that they received physical assistance from their coworker(s), and most of these participants indicated this type of support to be very helpful. In my second hypothesis I believed that that type of support would only by moderately helpful. However, workplace social support in the form of physical assistance seems to one of the most helpful types of social support.

Social support received as social participation also was found to be in the range of "pretty helpful" to "very helpful" by many of the participants; however, it did not seem as important and helpful as private feelings, positive feedback, organizational policies, and physical assistance. Therefore, there was evidence in support of hypothesis two that social participation would be regarded as moderately helpful. These results may reflect the possibility that many of the participants suffer mild depression immediately after the death of their family member and are consequently having difficulties interacting with others. Additionally, the bereaved tended to not want or benefit from social participation if they perceived that others within the workplace were insensitive to or uncomfortable with the bereaved employee's situation.

Finally, there was no evidence to support my third hypothesis that workplace social support provided in the form of material aid was the least helpful type of social support. Many of the participants were provided with some type of material aid to help them with their loss, and most indicated this was very helpful. While the material aid itself may not have be very helpful to the bereaved employee's grief process, I believe it was the gesture of support that was very helpful to most of the participants.
As one can see, all of the types of workplace social support examined here were deemed as being pretty to very helpful. No one type of social support was reported as being overwhelmingly helpful or unhelpful. Most of the participants received some form of workplace social support from various sources within their workplace. Now, I continue by discussing which sources of social support were indicated as most helpful.

**Comparisons of the sources of social support**

Evidence was presented to support my fourth hypothesis that sharing private feelings will be more helpful with coworkers than supervisors and employees; however, the percentage differences between the helpfulness of sharing with a coworker and a supervisor were not large. Sharing things that were personal and private with coworkers seemed to be pretty to very helpful (20%; 55%) closely followed by pretty to very helpful with supervisors (33%; 46%). Once again, these results reflect the likelihood of relational development with fellow coworkers and support that sharing private feelings will be more helpful with coworkers than supervisors or subordinates.

Based on the results, evidence is provided that does not support my fifth hypothesis that receiving material aid will be more helpful from supervisors than coworkers or employees. More participants received material aid from their coworker(s), and more participants indicated this material aid to be very helpful. However, most examples of material aid included tangible goods in the form of sympathy gifts. I theorize that because coworker relationships are more likely to be close than supervisor/subordinate relationships, coworkers are better informed of their fellow coworkers’ situations. Thus, coworkers may be more informed and may be in better positions to buy appropriate sympathy gifts. Additionally, one may also presume that bereaved employees may have more coworkers in which to receive material aid in comparison to the number of supervisors.
Evidence was reported to support my sixth hypothesis that receiving advice and guidance will be helpful from supervisors, coworkers or employees. Only a handful of participants reported that they actually received advice and/or guidance in their workplace, and regardless of the source, most reported the advice to be “pretty helpful” to “very helpful”. Once again this reflects many of the participant’s willingness to receive advice from others who have also experiences similar situations, and of course, these others may be from all levels of the organization.

Evidence to support my seventh hypothesis was presented in the results. Most participants received positive feedback from their supervisors and indicated this type of social support as being moderately to very helpful. Again, I believed that receiving feedback from one’s supervisor would be the most familiar to a bereaved employee and, therefore, I believed this type of social support would occur most frequently between the bereaved employee and his or her supervisor. Because a precedence of feedback existed before the death of the family member, supervisors were in a position to continue this mode of support.

While most participants received physical assistance from their coworker(s), regardless of the source of this type of social support, it was reported as being very helpful. Therefore, the evidence supports the eighth hypothesis that receiving physical assistance will be helpful from all sources. Again, these results are not surprising because of the nature of the grief process. Bereaved employees usually have difficulty returning to work at their previous level of performance. It seems normal to assume that one would regard help in the form of physical assistance to be very helpful regardless of the source.

While most participants indicated that they actually went out with other coworkers to have fun or to relax, all sources were reported as providing pretty to very helpful social participation. Although the number of participants reflects that most bereaved
employees engage socially with other coworkers, this source was not necessarily the most helpful. Therefore, there is no evidence that supports the ninth hypothesis that social participation will be more helpful with coworkers than supervisors and employees.

Lastly, clear evidence was reported to support my tenth hypothesis that bereavement leave will be more helpful than any other type of organizational policy. Of the participants who indicated they actually used bereavement leave (n = 21), all but two reported this organizational policy to be the most useful. In addition, of all the policy options that participants indicated were available, the most utilized was the bereavement leave. These results are not surprising given that when an immediate family member dies, time away from work is needed to deal with the emotional and physical realities surrounding the death.

Evidence has been discussed to address the comparisons of helpfulness among the seven types of workplace social support. It seems that regardless of the source of support, all seven types of workplace social support were reported as being helpful. Several of the types did seem to be more or less helpful depending on the source; however in general, any type of workplace social support seemed to be helpful and appreciated by the participants. Based upon these results and interpretations, the next chapter will conclude by discussing the general implications of these findings, the limitations of this research, and finally, recommendations to further aid organizations in handling grief issues.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

General implications

"If a modest amount of support and understanding is available, previously valued employees can emerge from their grief to achieve even higher levels of productivity and contribution as their work assumes a more central position in their lives. Thus it is in the interest of employers to make a conscious effort to help rather than to unconsciously hinder the recently bereaved" (Rogers, 1980, p. 228). Twenty years ago researchers were attempting to address grief issues in the workplace. However, to date, there is only a moderate amount of social support literature providing employers and employees with specific information. This research project has attempted to further the research literature by addressing the helpfulness of specific types of social support and the sources of that social support.

Previous research has indicated that organizations have the potential to hinder their employees' grief process by failing to provide adequate workplace social support. However, this assumption was not supported in my research. Evidence presented in this paper indicates that most of the participants found their workplaces to be helpful in adjusting to their loss, and most participants received social support from at least one of the types of workplace social support presented in this paper. Many researchers have suggested that under the day-to-day demands of everyday work life, others often pull away from the needs of bereaved individuals. There have also been suggestions that the workplace is "...a new frontier for exploring collaborative ways in which we can support each other in times of grief" (Lattanzi-Licht, 1999, p. 26). I completely agree and present this research as a positive step towards providing bereaved employees with the social support they need.
All of the participants shared personal information throughout the course of the project that I believe to be invaluable to social support and grief literature. However, before I share the emergent recommendations, I will present some limitations of the study that the reader should take into consideration.

Limitations of this study

Procedural difficulties

As previously mentioned, I had difficulties obtaining permission from major organizations to post notices in employee newsletters, company newsletters, and organizational memos. A significant goal of this project was to have a variety of organizations represented, and as will be discussed shortly, ultimately there were a limited number of organizations and professions. After exhausting avenues to gain access to the major employers in Missoula County, I posted notices in about seventy-five percent of Missoula County churches and finally, I was able to send a mass e-mail throughout the university system requesting volunteers. Because of the limited number of communication avenues available and the corresponding low response from the community, only a small percentage of bereaved employees within Missoula County were made aware of my research project. Thus the data can be considered limited in the breadth of participants and the representations of professions and organizations.

On the other hand, these procedural difficulties may reflect employers' indifference to this topic, which is an interesting insight. While I was never directly denied access to the organizations, my phone calls were rarely returned and I never sensed any significant interest in this very timely topic. Based on these responses, I came to one of two conclusions. First, one may conclude that organizational responses to employees' grieving processes are not a priority and are not given much attention. And second, employers believe that they are successfully handling grief in the workplace.
but are unwilling to examine the positive or negative effects of the current policies. It seems that the organization (the university) most willing to provide me with communication avenues is also the organization that participants indicated as having the most flexible and personal bereavement policies.

**Difficulties in data-gathering**

Because of my interest to provide both quantitative and qualitative analysis to organizations, I chose to incorporate several open-ended questions throughout the questionnaire, asking participants to provide examples of workplace social support they had received and to describe situations or moments in which they believed they needed to engage in emotion management. Additionally, because I was tape-recording and transcribing all interviews, I requested for the participants to elaborate on any of their quantitative responses. It is important to note that participants were either very eager to share their examples of workplace social support or did not have very many examples to share. Because the questions were structured in a way that required retrospective analysis, many of the participants could not remember specific examples of social support they had received upon returning to work. This is considered a limitation with this study in that the qualitative data was not as rich due to the likelihood that the grief process often affects concentration and memory. Similarly, Repetti (1987) makes note that personality variables, such as an employee's frame of mind, have been found to affect the perceptions of social conditions at work. However, I speculate that of the qualitative data that were provided, these data were the most memorable and possibly the most important and/or helpful to the participants.

Another implication of the data-gathering procedures arose when participants asked me to explain my motivations for conducting this research. I believe that many people, regardless of the experience, do not want to share their thoughts with others
who may not be able to understand or relate to that experience. Losing an immediate family member can be a very painful event and one that individuals may not want to share readily. Of the respondents who called me to request more information about the study, those who specifically asked why I chose this topic seemed more willing to meet with me when I revealed my mother had passed away a short time before. Because this personal information was not included in my notices, flyers, or e-mails, I believe others may have been interested in volunteering but were reluctant to talk with a "researcher."

Additionally, I suspect that because most of the results indicate that participants received helpful social support in their workplace, most of the participants had positive experiences when they returned to work. Many of the participants expressed their desire to share with others the ways in which their workplace peers aided their transition back to work. Finally, almost all of the participants were able to provide examples of helpful social support but none described any examples of unhelpful social support. Based on these results, I am unable to claim that most people have successful transitions back to work and that they receive helpful social support. However, the data gathered reflect and describe social support that was helpful in creating positive experiences when participants returned to work after the death of a family member.

**Participant limitations and implications**

Originally, I hoped to interview at least fifty participants, but only about forty responded to my notices and requests for volunteers. Of those forty respondents, I was able to interview twenty-six participants. Most of the other fourteen respondents who called to inquire about the project seemed interested in the project but did not establish an interview time. This number (26) was half of my original goal, and consequently, there were not enough participants to generalize any of the data results or to test my hypotheses formally. I must also make note that of the twenty-six participants, twenty-
one were women. Based upon previous research on gender differences in communication this statistic is not surprising. "Generally, research has found that women are more likely than men to seek and provide emotional support; women also are more likely to employ supportive forms of communication that explicitly address feelings, perspectives, and subjective interpretations" (Kunkel & Burleson, 1998, p. 107).

For the purposes of this project, I found female participant’s explanations and descriptions to be much richer and more detailed than the male participants. It seemed as though women were able to easily recall examples of significant social support because of the emotions attached to those memories. Additionally, I believe that women may be more sensitive to the helpfulness and unhelpfulness of social support because they provide more supportive forms of communication. Furthermore, women may be better equipped at receiving and acknowledging social support attempts.

As briefly discussed earlier, a wide variety of organizations was not represented. Seventeen participants were employed with the university and the remaining nine were from an assortment of organizations. Many of the university employees expressed that they had worked in the university system for many years and described the university as a community in which there are close personal ties. This reflection of the university community has an impact on the data results. One may presume that if an employee has been with an organization for a long while, others within the organization have had the opportunity to develop a relationship with the employee and the employee’s family. This presumption can be taken a step further to say that if relationships and friendships have been developed, there is a greater likelihood of receiving a variety of social support after the death of a family member. Both the presumption of a greater number of relationships as well as the presumptions of a great likelihood of social support has the potential to bias the data results.
Another consideration is that this research was conducted in a small northwestern university town. Most participants were employed by the university, which reflects the fact that the university is one of the largest employers in Missoula. Additionally, many organizations in Missoula are small, often employing only a few people. Therefore, the network of available others to provide social support may not be large. Also, many of the participants were not in supervisory positions, and so, did not have employees in which they could receive social support.

Finally, the wrap-up questions attempted to gauge if the participants had received help and grief support outside of their workplace, and if so, how much grief support they had received from each individual or group mentioned. All of the participants stated that they received additional grief support from at least one other person or group outside of their workplace, most (72%) receiving additional grief support from their family. Knowing this, we must keep in mind that if participants indicated they have received a great deal of support from outside sources, they may not have had as great a need for workplace social support. Based on these implications and limitations, caution must be exercised when reviewing the following recommendations.

**Recommendations**

**Roles within the organization**

Many grief researchers have presented ideas for supportive actions for employers; however, I have yet to come across research that provides specific recommendations for supervisors, coworkers, and/or employees. As previously discussed in this paper, much of the mainstream literature provides only general advice and guidelines for organizations and managers. This advice usually addresses financial, emotional, and practical support but only at a very general level. This research project has attempted to assess each type of workplace social support, as well as the perceived
and actual networks, derived from Barrera and Ainlay's (1983) typology and Barrera's (1981) questionnaire. Based on the findings of this research, it seems that regardless of one's position within an organization, one has the potential to provide some type of social support to a bereaved coworker. I believe the true gem in this research is the discovery that all forms of social support were regarded as helpful. Because coworkers within a workplace have varying degrees of relationships, coworkers have at least six types of social support (not including organizational policies) from which to choose in their attempt to aid bereaved coworkers. The following section presents the major themes and specific examples of each type of social support provided by participants that were labeled as helpful to their grief process.

**Examples and recommendations of workplace social support**

**Private feelings**

Of course, if one has a friendship relationship with another employee within their workplace, they probably have precedents in sharing private feelings with one another. However, even without an established intimate relationship, many of the participants reported that they shared their personal and private feelings with others when they first received the news of their loved one's death. None of the participants reported if their confidants also revealed any private feelings, so it is not known if one must engage in conversation of reciprocal self-disclosure.

Many participants revealed that they shared their thoughts and feelings with other coworkers who have experienced similar situations. In this instance, it was noted several times that talking with someone who could relate to feelings of loss and sadness was very beneficial. Hence, depending upon your relationship and prior life experiences, you may or may not be able or willing to engage in this type of social support.
While engaging in an intimate conversation may not comfortable, I believe it is essential that one does not ignore the bereaved employee or pretend everything is normal for them. One participant explained:

I think the worst thing to do is to totally ignore or not talk about what's happened. I think that some people are very comfortable with it and some people aren't, and in my case, the worst thing to do is nothing. Even if you can't say anything, a hug is good or a "Hi" is good, but to totally avoid what has happened or how the person is involved is the worst thing to do.

This sentiment is mirrored again by another participant's recommendation, "I think mostly it's just the acknowledgement that something is going on. I think that everybody's different about how they want to talk about it or don't want to talk about it... But just to offer that. But mostly just to acknowledge it."

**Material aid**

The most common form of material aid provided to the participants was in the form of sympathy gifts. Presenting bereaved coworkers with sympathy cards, flowers, or care packages was reported as being very helpful. By giving these types of gifts, coworkers convey to the bereaved employee that they acknowledge the significance of the loss and have made an effort to provide support. Material aid in the form of money was also listed a few times as being helpful. Depending on the circumstances of the death, medical bills, travel expenses, and funeral expenses can be very costly and can cause bereaved employees to face financial difficulties in addition to the loss. Financial support was provided by several participants' coworkers in various forms, including airline vouchers and coupons, and even a simple cup of coffee. Additionally, several
participants' supervisors and organizations continued to pay them during their absence and provided them with pay advances.

Advice/guidance

Unless they have experienced a significant loss before, usually bereaved employees are unaware of ways to manage their own grief effectively. In this project, many participants indicated that they received advice related to not only their grief process, but also concerning how to manage their workload while grieving. Many participants reported that their coworkers advised that they take their time working through things and validated their grief feelings. Additionally, advice from others who have also experienced a loss and shared the ways they successfully worked through their process was also reported as helpful.

Feedback

Many participants indicated that they did not receive feedback about their work performance when they returned to work, and several participants indicated that they believed it was their responsibility to seek work-related feedback from others. Examples of feedback ranged from giving praise for the work the participants were able to accomplish, to just letting the participants know what others expected of them in regard to workload. Because supervisors were reported as being the source from which most feedback was received, it seems that this area of social support is also best received from supervisors.

Supervisors should meet with the bereaved employee upon the return of work and check in with him or her frequently in the weeks and months that follow. An employee who is bereaved may no longer be able to sustain previous levels of activity or performance. Frequent supervision
and problem-solving efforts can help the employee maintain self-esteem and a sense of contribution... Allowing the employee to identify the areas of adequate functioning and those where additional help may be needed builds trust and support and enhances functional potential for the employee (Lattanzi-Licht, 1999, p. 24).

**Physical assistance**

The most common occurrence of physical assistance indicated by the participants ensued when the participants initially returned to work. Many participants reported that they received the most helpful forms of physical assistance immediately upon their return to work, when they were too grief-stricken to assume their previous workload. Because an individual’s grief process is unique and indeterminate, others may need to take over work shifts, run meetings, make phone calls and any other additional work that can be passed on to other employees. Some bereaved employees may view work as a welcome escape from their grief and appear fine returning to their previous workload. However, most employees will struggle with depression, loss of energy, and a lack of concentration. Therefore, if an employee/coworker is able and available to offer physical assistance, this can serve as a very helpful form of workplace social support to almost all bereaved employees. One participant explained, “I guess it’s... how they [employers] approach you with a willingness to be helpful and don’t worry and that sort of thing. That was what was important.”

**Social participation**

Workplace environments and relationships vary greatly; engaging in social activities with others from the workplace may be commonplace or it may be unheard of. Similarly, employees are very different in how they view socializing with others from
work. Some of the participants indicated that they viewed the people within their workplace as an extended family while other participants reported a clear distinction between their work lives and their private lives. Of those who did enjoy engaging socially with others from work, most reported doing informal activities such as taking a walk, going to lunch, having a cup of coffee, and socializing over a beer after work. For most, these activities are brief and informal but can be an effective form of workplace social support for a bereaved employee.

**Organizational policies**

Finally, most participants expressed that the bereavement leave they received was by far the most helpful organizational policy that was available to them. While most organizations only provide three days of bereavement leave, many of the participants indicated they received much longer than three days. There are few situations in which three days would be sufficient time to deal with the death of a loved one. For family members who live across the country, travel would consume a great deal of the allotted leave time. Bereavement leave policies, if only three days, represent limited support forcing employees to used additional days from time or to take time off without pay (Lattanzi-Licht, 1999). An idea presented in the Workplace Task Force of the Last Acts Campaign (1999) provided several suggestions that were very similar to recommendations provided by participants. One participant who struggled with her son's funeral expenses recommended that large organizations establish a bereavement fund or make financial contributions toward funeral expenses. Additionally, organizations might consider implementing policies in which other employees are allowed to donate their sick time and vacation time in order extend a bereaved employee's bereavement leave. Finally, if it is difficult to implement formal organizational policies, creating informal policies to enhance workplace support and
ensure an employee's job security is also very helpful. One participant described what was most helpful for her was the assurance of her job security. "I didn't need to worry about whether or not I was going to lose my job if I busted into tears one day... It helps everybody because I think if they wouldn't have been like that towards me, I probably would've missed a lot more work."

Additional participant comments and advice

Many participants reported having a very positive experience when they returned to work after the death of a family member. How their organization, supervisors, and peers supported them when they returned had a significant impact on their feelings toward their work, their coworkers, and their grief process. One participant explained:

Part of it is just that strong sense of who I am and what I have to contribute matters more to the company than this particular month in the ten years I've worked there or the next two months or maybe even the next six months. I have something to contribute, and they have to validate me even though we all know that the way that I'm working now is not exactly the way I would choose. But it's a commitment to me and in helping me get through this however they can.

Additionally several participants regarded their work and their workplace as a means to regain normalcy.

Work is a very normalizing thing for people... I think that work is probably, both from my personal experience and my observational experience, a very normalizing kind of thing. Even though death is a very normal event, it is not a normal event. It only takes place a few times, and people are so incredibly different that we need to let them be different. But when something traumatic happens, normalizing is good.
Understanding the dynamics of normal grief and that the symptoms of grief are transient is important to those interacting with bereaved employees. Recognizing the normalizing effects of workplace social support and implementing workplace social support can help employees manage their grief without expert professional intervention (Rogers, 1980).

The recommendation for workplaces is training through which educational programs could be instituted. Knowledge of the effects of support dimensions may have implications for structuring the work environment as well as for better individual understanding of the dynamics of social support on the grief process. Organizations need to provide useful tools for further understanding both the effect of support or lack of support from others on the bereaved employee (Brabant et al., 1995). Over a decade ago Vaux (1988) suggested that,

 Individuals possess different psychological and social assets and occupy an array of social ecological niches. These factors undoubtedly influence the availability and competence of support resources, help seeking, supportive behavior, and other aspects of the support process, yet they have been subjected to little study (p. 132).

Today, these factors are still present and still have yet to be diligently studied. We believe and act as though social support is important to those who are bereaved, and many suggest that this is appropriate behavior. This research has added another element of credibility to this theory that social support benefits bereaved individuals but further comparisons of social support are needed.
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Appendix A
Cover Letter

Lauren C. Leger, Graduate Student
Liberal Arts Building room #301
Department of Communication Studies
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59803
406-243-6604 (office)
e-mail: tazman@selway.umt.edu

Dear Potential Participant,

I am writing this to ask for your help on a research project about **grief in the workplace**. I am hoping to discover what types of workplace help are most common and useful to those who have lost a loved one within the last two years. Based on my own personal experiences and those I've heard in grief support groups, returning to work after the death of a loved one is often difficult. With the results of this research project, I hope to be able to provide others with valuable information regarding the need for **social support in the workplace**.

If you would like to take part in this research, you will be asked to meet with me for approximately 1 hour in an interview. During that time I will be asking you some questions about how you were/are able to express your feelings at work and about specifics types of help you received at work and from whom.

While all information gathered will be seen by both my research advisor and myself all records will be kept confidential and will not be released without your consent as required by law. If the results of this study are written in an academic journal or presented to others, your name will not be used. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, you may refuse to take part, or you may withdraw from this study at any time.

I believe that taking part in this project could be helpful to you because it will give you the chance to share your thoughts and experiences. However, because the topic of this research is very sensitive, there is a possibility that the interview may remind you of negative feelings and memories. Hospice Social Workers Annie Warner (728-8848) and Vickie Kammerer (728-8848) of Partners in Home Care, Inc. have offered their counseling services should any problems come up.

If you should agree to participate in this study, you will be given another letter at the beginning of the interview detailing the specifics of this project and requesting your consent to be interviewed and to be tape-recorded. Please call me at work or at home, or e-mail me if you would like to participate or if you have any questions. Thanks so much for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,

Lauren C. Leger  
e-mail: tazman@selway.umt.edu  
406-243-6604 (office)  

Research Advisor:  
Dr. Sally Planalp  
e-mail: sallyp@selway.umt.edu  
406-243-4951
Appendix B
Consent Letter

Title: The effects of workplace social support on the grief process

Researcher:  
Lauren C. Leger, graduate student  
Liberal Arts Building room 301  
Department of Communication  
University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812  
406-243-6604 (office)  
e-mail: tazman@selway.umt.edu

Research Advisor:  
Dr. Sally Planalp  
Liberal Arts Building room 358  
Department of Communication  
University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812  
406-243-4951  
e-mail: sallyp@selway.umt.edu

This consent form may contain words that are new to you. If you read any words that are not clear to you, please ask me to explain them to you.

Purpose: To learn what types of help are offered at work to an employee who has lost an immediate family member.

Procedures: The interview takes about 1-2 hours. I will ask you to answer some questions about how you were/are able to express your feelings at work and the kinds of help you have received at work. We will be able to arrange a convenient place and time for the interview. All interviews will be tape-recorded and completely transcribed.

Benefits: Sometimes talking to others can help you through your process. I hope that you will also find some personal benefit to sharing your thoughts with me about your experiences with coworkers and how you deal with your grief in your workplace.

Risks/Discomforts: Because of the sensitive nature of this topic, there is a possibility that participating in this study may cause negative feelings or remind you of negative memories. If this should happen and you would like to meet with a professional, Social Workers, and grief counselors Annie Warner and Vickie Kammerer will be available to meet with you. You may reach them at Partners in Home Care, Inc.: 728-8848.

Confidentiality: All information collected will be confidential. The information gathered and recorded will be seen only by my research advisor, Dr. Sally Planalp, and myself. All records will be locked securely in Dr. Planalp's office. Your interview will be given a number code only and your name will not be used.

If I want to include any statements or stories you have shared with me, I will ask you to sign a written consent form for your permission. Three years after the completion of this research project, all records will be destroyed.

During this interview, if I have reason to believe you may cause harm to yourself or others, I am required to take steps to protect you or the other person(s), which may compromise your confidentiality.
**Compensation for Injury:** Because there is an emotional risk involved in taking part in this study, the following liability statement is required in all University of Montana consent forms.

In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University’s Claims representative or University Legal Counsel.

**Voluntary Participation/ Withdrawal:** You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision to take part in this research study is entirely voluntary. If you are uncomfortable at any time during the interview, please let me know and we will make any necessary adjustments. Similarly, I may feel that it would be best to discontinue the interview if I feel your health and welfare are in jeopardy.

**Questions:** If you have any questions about this research project now or during the study, please feel free to contact me or Professor Sally Planalp at 243-4951 or 243-4293. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Jon Rubach, through the Research Office at the University of Montana at 243-6670.

Sincerely,

Lauren C. Leger

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that a member of the research team will answer any future questions I may have. I voluntarily agree to take part in this research. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form.

______________________________

Printed Name of Participant

______________________________

Participant’s Signature Date
Statement of Consent: I agree to be tape-recorded during my interview.

Printed Name of Participant

Participant's Signature Date

Please include either your work phone number, home phone number, or an e-mail address.
Appendix C
Consent Letter

Title: The effects of workplace social support on the grief process

Researcher: Lauren C. Leger, graduate student
Liberal Arts Building room 301
Department of Communication
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812
406-243-6604 (office)
e-mail: laurenleger@hotmail.com

Research Advisor: Dr. Sally Planalp
Liberal Arts Building room 358
Department of Communication
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812
406-243-4951
e-mail: sallyp@selway.umt.edu

This consent form may contain words that are new to you. If you read any words that are not clear to you, please ask me to explain them to you.

Purpose: To learn what types of help are offered at work to an employee who has lost an immediate family member.

Benefits: Sometimes talking to others can help you through your process. I hope that you will also find some personal benefit to sharing your thoughts with me about your experiences with coworkers and how you deal with your grief in your workplace.

Risks/Discomforts: Because of the sensitive nature of this topic, there is a possibility that participating in this study may cause negative feelings or remind you of negative memories. If this should happen and you would like to meet with a professional, Social Workers and grief counselors Annie Warner and Vickie Kammerer will be available to meet with you. You may reach them at Partners in Home Care, Inc.: 728-8848.

Confidentiality: All information collected will be confidential. The information gathered and recorded will be seen only by my research advisor, Dr. Sally Planalp, and myself. All records will be locked securely in Dr. Planalp's office. Your interview will be given a number code only and your name will not be used.

If I want to include any statements or stories you have shared with me, I will ask you to sign a written consent form for your permission. Three years after the completion of this research project, all records will be destroyed.

Compensation for Injury: Because there is an emotional risk involved in taking part in this study, the following liability statement is required in all University of Montana consent forms.

In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the
event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's Claims representative or University Legal Counsel.

Voluntary Participation/ Withdrawal: You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision to take part in this research study is entirely voluntary.

Questions: If you have any questions about this research project now or during the study, please feel free to contact me or Professor Sally Planalp at 243-4951 or 243-4293. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Jon Rubach, through the Research Office at the University of Montana at 243-6670.

Sincerely,

Lauren C. Leger

Statement of Consent: I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions I may have will be answered by a member of the research team. I voluntarily agree to take part in this research

________________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

________________________________________________________
Participant's Signature Date

Statement of Consent: I give permission to use the statements and stories I presented during my research interview. I understand that these statements will be confidential and will be presented to others in both oral and written presentations.

________________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

________________________________________________________
Participant's Signature Date
Appendix D
Demographics

1. Sex: Male or Female
   Male: (n = 5, 19%)
   Female: (n = 21, 81%)

2. Age:
   18 – 25: (n = 2, 8%)
   26 – 35: (n = 3, 12%)
   36 – 45: (n = 7, 27%)
   46 – 55: (n = 6, 23%)
   56 – 65: (n = 7, 27%)
   66 – 75: (n = 1, 4%)

3. What was your relationship with the deceased?
   Mother: (n = 3, 31%)
   Father: (n = 5, 19%)
   Sister: (n = 4, 15%)
   Son: (n = 3, 12%)
   Spouse: (n = 2, 8%)
   Step-child: (n = 2, 8%)
   Daughter: (n = 1, 4%)
   Step-parent: (n = 1, 4%)

4. When did your loved one pass on? [in months since the time of the interview]
   0 – 6 months: (n = 9, 35%)
   7 – 12 months: (n = 6, 23%)
   13 – 18 months: (n = 5, 19%)
   19 – 24 months: (n = 6, 23%)

5. What was the cause of death?
   Cancer: (n = 9, 35%)
   Accident: (n = 6, 23%)
   Heart attack: (n = 4, 15%)
   Other: (n = 7, 27%)

6. Did your loved one live with you in your home?
   Yes: (n = 5, 19%)
   No: (n = 21, 81%)

7. Did your loved one live in Missoula County?
   Yes: (n = 10, 39%)
   No: (n = 16, 61%)

8. Are you currently participating in a grief support group of any kind?
   Yes: (n = 3, 12%)
   No: (n = 23, 88%)
Appendix E
Arizona Social Support Interview Schedule
(Barrera, 1981)

In the next few minutes I would like to learn about help you may have received from people you work with. After I read each description I will be asking you give me the working title of the people who fit the description (boss, manager, supervisor, coworker, employee, etc.). I will only want you to give me the working title of those people you have received support from since the death of your loved one. If you have any questions about the descriptions after I read each one, please ask me to try and make it clearer.

PRIVATE FEELINGS
1. If you wanted to talk to someone at work about things that are very personal and private, whom would you talk to?

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people at work did you actually talk to about things that were personal and private?
   If you feel comfortable, would you give me some examples?

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked:
   1 = a lot more opportunities to talk to people about your personal and private feelings
   2 = a few more opportunities
   3 = this was about right
   4 = or was it more than your needed?

4. Since your loved one passed on, how much do you think that you needed people to talk about things that were very personal and private?
   1 = not at all
   2 = a little bit
   3 = quite a bit

5. How helpful was it to talk about things that were personal and private with each person identified in question #2?
   1 = not at all helpful
   2 = somewhat helpful
   3 = moderately helpful
   4 = pretty helpful
   5 = very helpful

MATERIAL AID
1. Who are the people you know at work that would lend or give you something that was useful such as a physical object or money?

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people actually gave or loaned you some object that you needed?
   If you feel comfortable, would you give me some examples?
3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked people to have loaned you or to have given you:
   1 = a lot more
   2 = a little more
   3 = it was about right
   4 = or less?

4. Since your loved one passed on, how much do you think you needed people who could give or lend you things that you needed?
   1 = not at all
   2 = a little bit
   3 = quite a bit

5. How helpful was it when the people identified in question #2 gave you or loaned you something useful?
   1 = not at all helpful
   2 = somewhat helpful
   3 = moderately helpful
   4 = pretty helpful
   5 = very helpful

ADVICE/GUIDANCE

1. Who would you go to at work if a situation came up when you needed some advice?

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people actually gave you some important advice?
   If you feel comfortable, would you give me some advice you have received?

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked:
   1 = a lot more advice
   2 = a little more advice
   3 = it was about right
   4 = or less advice?

4. Since your loved one passed on, how much do you think you needed to get advice?
   1 = not at all
   2 = a little bit
   3 = quite a bit

5. How helpful was the advice you received from each person you identified in question #2?
   1 = not at all helpful
   2 = somewhat helpful
   3 = moderately helpful
   4 = pretty helpful
   5 = very helpful
POSITIVE FEEDBACK
1. Who are the people at work that you could expect to let you know how you are doing at work?

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people let you know how you were doing at work?
   If you feel comfortable, would you give me some examples of how other people let you know how you were doing at work?

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked people to tell you how you were doing at work:
   1 = a lot more often
   2 = a little more
   3 = it was about right
   4 = or less?

4. Since your loved one passed on, how much do you think you needed to have people let you know how you were doing at work?
   1 = not at all
   2 = a little bit
   3 = quite a bit

5. How helpful was it to receive feedback about your work from each person identified in questions #2?
   1 = not at all helpful
   2 = somewhat helpful
   3 = moderately helpful
   4 = pretty helpful
   5 = very helpful

PHYSICAL ASSISTANCE
1. Who are the people at work that you could call on to help you take care of something that you needed to do — things like helping you do some work at the office, running errands for you, providing you a place to get away for awhile and things like that?

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people actually pitched in to help you do things that you needed some help with?
   If you feel comfortable, would you give me some examples of situations in which you asked someone at work to help you do something?

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked:
   1 = a lot more help with things that you needed to do
   2 = a little more help
   3 = this was about right
   4 = or less help?

4. Since your loved one passed on, how much do you feel you needed people to help you do things?
5. For each person you identified in questions #2, how helpful was it to have them help you do something?
   1 = not at all helpful
   2 = somewhat helpful
   3 = moderately helpful
   4 = pretty helpful
   5 = very helpful

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION
1. Who are the people that you get together with at work to have fun or to relax?
2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people did you actually get together with to have fun or to relax?

   If you feel comfortable, would you give me some examples of when you got together with people at work to have fun or to relax?

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked:
   1 = a lot more opportunities to get together with people for fun and relaxation
   2 = a few more
   3 = this was about right
   4 = or fewer opportunities?

4. How much do you think that you needed to get together with other people for fun and relaxation since your loved one passed on?
   1 = not at all
   2 = a little bit
   3 = quite a bit

5. How helpful was it to have fun and to relax with those people identified in question #2?
   1 = not at all helpful
   2 = somewhat helpful
   3 = moderately helpful
   4 = pretty helpful
   5 = very helpful

ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES
1. When your loved one passed on, what company policies or programs were available to you to help you with your loss, such as bereavement leave, flex time, vacation pooling, etc.?

2. When your loved one passed on, which company policies did you use?

3. When your loved one passed on, would you have liked:
   1 = a lot more policy options
2 = a few more policy options
3 = this was about right
4 = or less policy options?

4. When your loved one passed on, how much do think that you needed those policies?
   1 = not at all
   2 = a little bit
   3 = quite a bit

5. How helpful was it to have those company policies available?
   1 = not at all helpful
   2 = somewhat helpful
   3 = moderately helpful
   4 = pretty helpful
   5 = very helpful

WRAP-UP QUESTIONS
1. In terms of coping with your loss, was the general atmosphere of your workplace helpful or unhelpful?

2. Are there any differences that you can describe between the help and grief support you got from people at work compared to people outside your work?

3. Who have you received help from outside of your workplace?

4. For each person or group just listed, how much help and grief support have you received from each one?

___________________________

1 = very little
2 = a little
3 = moderate amount
4 = some
5 = a great deal

___________________________

1 = very little
2 = a little
3 = moderate amount
4 = some
5 = a great deal

___________________________
1 = very little
2 = a little
3 = moderate amount
4 = some
5 = a great deal

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with me that we did not cover during this interview?
Appendix F
Emotion management questions

1. Can you recall and describe any situations or moments at work in which you believe you were able to express your emotions? Please describe.

2. Did you feel it was helpful or unhelpful to express your emotions at work? If so, can you explain why you feel this way?

3. Can you recall and describe any situations or moments at work in which you believe you were unable to express your emotions? Please describe.

4. Did you feel it was helpful or unhelpful to not be able to express your emotions at work? If so, can you explain why you feel this way?
Appendix G
Private feelings

1. If you wanted to talk to someone at work about things that are very personal and private, whom would you talk to?
   Supervisor: Yes (n = 16, 62%)  No (n = 10, 38%)
   Coworker: Yes (n = 18, 69%)  No (n = 8, 31%)
   Employee: Yes (n = 4, 15%)  No (n = 22, 85%)
   Other: Yes (n = 3, 12%)  No (n = 23, 88%)

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people at work did you actually talk to about things that were personal and private?
   Supervisor: Yes (n = 14, 54%)  No (n = 12, 46%)
   Coworker: Yes (n = 20, 77%)  No (n = 6, 23%)
   Employee: Yes (n = 5, 19%)  No (n = 21, 81%)
   Other: Yes (n = 3, 12%)  No (n = 23, 88%)

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked:
   1 = a lot more opportunities to talk to people about your personal and private feelings  (n = 3, 12%)
   2 = a few more opportunities  (n = 5, 19%)
   3 = this was about right  (n = 18, 69%)
   4 = or was it more than you needed?
   Median = 3; Mean = 2.6; Standard Deviation = 0.7

4. Since your loved one passed on, how much do you think that you needed people to talk about things that were very personal and private?
   1 = not at all
   2 = a little bit  (n = 17, 65%)
   3 = quite a bit  (n = 9, 35%)
   Median = 2; Mean = 2.3; Standard Deviation = 0.5
Private feelings continued

5. How helpful was it to talk about things that were personal and private with each person identified in question #2?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 5, 19%)</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 7, 27%)</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 11, 42%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median = 4; Mean = 4; Standard Deviation = 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coworker:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful</td>
<td>(n = 2, 8%)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
<td>(n = 2, 8%)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 4, 15%)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 11, 42%)</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 6, 23%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median = 5; Mean = 4; Standard Deviation = 1.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0, 0%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0, 0%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0, 0%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 4, 15%)</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 21, 81%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median = 5; Mean = 4.6; Standard Deviation = 0.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0, 0%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0, 0%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0, 0%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 3, 12%)</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 22, 85%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median = 5; Mean = 4.75; Standard Deviation = 0.5
Appendix H
Material aid

1. Who are the people you know at work that would lend or give you something that was useful such as a physical object or money?

   Supervisor: Yes (n = 21, 81%)  No (n = 5, 19%)
   Coworker:   Yes (n = 20, 77%)  No (n = 6, 23%)
   Employee:  Yes (n = 10, 39%)  No (n = 16, 61%)
   Other:     Yes (n = 9, 35%)   No (n = 17, 65%)

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people actually gave or loaned you some object that you needed?

   Supervisor: Yes (n = 13, 50%)  No (n = 13, 50%)
   Coworker:   Yes (n = 13, 50%)  No (n = 13, 50%)
   Employee:  Yes (n = 8, 31%)   No (n = 18, 69%)
   Other:     Yes (n = 7, 27%)   No (n = 19, 73%)

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked people to have loaned you or to have given you:

   1 = a lot more
   2 = a little more (n = 2, 8%)
   3 = it was about right (n = 22, 85%)
   4 = or less? (n = 1, 4%)
   99 = missing (n = 1, 4%)

4. Since your loved one passed on, how much do you think you needed people who could give or lend you things that you needed?

   1 = not at all (n = 10, 39%)
   2 = a little bit (n = 11, 42%)
   3 = quite a bit (n = 4, 15%)
   99 = missing (n = 1, 4%)
Material aid continued

5. How helpful was it when the people identified in question #2 gave you or loaned you something useful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
<td>(n = 2, 8%)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 4, 15%)</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 8, 31%)</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 12, 46%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median = 5; Mean = 4.4; Standard Deviation = 0.76

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coworker:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 12, 46%)</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 11, 42%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median = 5; Mean = 4.6; Standard Deviation = 0.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 6, 23%)</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 18, 69%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median = 5; Mean = 4.6; Standard Deviation = 0.74

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
<td>(n = 2, 8%)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 4, 15%)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 2, 8%)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 18, 69%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median = 4; Mean = 4; Standard Deviation = 0.76
Appendix I
Advice/guidance

1. Who would you go to at work if a situation came up when you needed some advice?
   Supervisor: Yes (n = 17, 65%) No (n = 9, 35%)
   Coworker: Yes (n = 20, 77%) No (n = 6, 23%)
   Employee: Yes (n = 3, 12%) No (n = 23, 88%)
   Other: Yes (n = 7, 27%) No (n = 19, 73%)

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people actually gave you some important advice?
   Supervisor: Yes (n = 9, 35%) No (n = 17, 65%)
   Coworker: Yes (n = 12, 46%) No (n = 13, 50%)
   Employee: Yes (n = 2, 8%) No (n = 24, 92%)
   Other: Yes (n = 4, 15%) No (n = 22, 85%)

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked:
   1 = a lot more advice (n = 0)
   2 = a little more advice (n = 5, 19%)
   3 = it was about right (n = 21, 81%)
   4 = or less advice? (n = 0)
   Median = 3; Mean = 2; Standard Deviation = 0.4

4. Since your loved one passed on, how much do you think you needed to get advice?
   1 = not at all (n = 5, 19%)
   2 = a little bit (n = 14, 54%)
   3 = quite a bit (n = 7, 27%)
   Median = 2; Mean = 2; Standard Deviation = 0.69
Advice/Guidance continued

5. How helpful was the advice you received from each person you identified in question #2?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Those</th>
<th>Supervisor</th>
<th>Coworker</th>
<th>Employee</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who Found the Question Applicable</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 5, 19%)</td>
<td>(n = 7, 27%)</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>(n = 3, 12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 3, 12%)</td>
<td>(n = 3, 12%)</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%)</td>
<td>(n = 3, 12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 17, 65%)</td>
<td>(n = 15, 58%)</td>
<td>(n = 24, 92%)</td>
<td>(n = 22, 85%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median = 4; Mean = 4.2; Standard Deviation = 0.67

Median = 4; Mean = 4.18; Standard Deviation = 0.6

Median = 4.5; Mean = 4.5; Standard Deviation = 0.7

Median = 5; Mean = 4.25; Standard Deviation = 1.5
Appendix J
Positive feedback

1. Who are the people at work that you could expect to let you know how you are doing at work?
   - Supervisor: Yes (n = 21, 81%)  No (n = 5, 19%)
   - Coworker: Yes (n = 17, 65%)  No (n = 9, 35%)
   - Employee: Yes (n = 7, 27%)  No (n = 19, 73%)
   - Other: Yes (n = 5, 19%)  No (n = 21, 81%)

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people would you have liked to let you know how you were doing at work?
   - Supervisor: Yes (n = 16, 62%)  No (n = 10, 38%)
   - Coworker: Yes (n = 10, 39%)  No (n = 16, 61%)
   - Employee: Yes (n = 2, 8%)  No (n = 24, 92%)
   - Other: Yes (n = 1, 4%)  No (n = 25, 96%)

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked people to tell you how you were doing at work:
   - 1 = a lot more often  (n = 4, 15%)
   - 2 = a little more  (n = 7, 27%)
   - 3 = it was about right  (n = 15, 58%)
   - 4 = or less?

   Median = 3; Mean = 2.4; Standard Deviation = 0.75

4. Since your loved one passed on, how much do you think you needed to have people let you know how you were doing at work?
   - 1 = not at all  (n = 4, 15%)
   - 2 = a little bit  (n = 17, 65%)
   - 3 = quite a bit  (n = 5, 19%)

   Median = 2; Mean = 2; Standard Deviation = 0.6
## Positive feedback continued

5. How helpful was it to receive feedback about your work from each person identified in question #2?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Supervisor</th>
<th>Coworker</th>
<th>Employee</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%) 6%</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%) 6%</td>
<td>(n = 3, 12%) 30%</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%) 50%</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%) 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
<td>(n = 5, 19%) 31%</td>
<td>(n = 2, 8%) 20%</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%) 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 6, 23%) 38%</td>
<td>(n = 4, 15%) 40%</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 3, 12%) 19%</td>
<td>(n = 1, 4%) 10%</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 10, 38%)</td>
<td>(n = 16, 61%)</td>
<td>(n = 24, 92%)</td>
<td>(n = 24, 92%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median = 4; Mean = 3.6; Standard Deviation = 1.09

Median = 3.5; Mean = 3.3; Standard Deviation = 1.06

Median = 3; Mean = 3; Standard Deviation = 1.4

Median = 2.5; Mean = 2.5; Standard Deviation = 0.7
### Appendix K

#### Physical assistance

1. Who are the people at work that you could call on to help you take care of something that you needed to do – things like helping you do some work at the office, running errands for you, providing you a place to get away for awhile and things like that?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes (n = 17, 65%)</th>
<th>No (n = 9, 35%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworker:</td>
<td>Yes (n = 22, 85%)</td>
<td>No (n = 4, 15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee:</td>
<td>Yes (n = 12, 46%)</td>
<td>No (n = 14, 54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>Yes (n = 7, 27%)</td>
<td>No (n = 19, 73%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people actually pitched in to help you do things that you needed some help with?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes (n = 10, 38%)</th>
<th>No (n = 16, 62%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworker:</td>
<td>Yes (n = 16, 62%)</td>
<td>No (n = 10, 38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee:</td>
<td>Yes (n = 9, 35%)</td>
<td>No (n = 17, 65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>Yes (n = 5, 19%)</td>
<td>No (n = 21, 81%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked:

| 1 = a lot more help with things that you needed to do | (n = 3, 12%) |
| 2 = a little more help                               | (n = 3, 12%) |
| 3 = this was about right                            | (n = 19, 73%) |
| 4 = or less help?                                   | (n = 1, 4%) |

Median = 3; Mean = 2.7; Standard Deviation = 0.74

4. Since your loved one passed on, how much do you feel you needed people to help you do things?

| 1 = not at all                                     | (n = 4, 15%) |
| 2 = a little bit                                    | (n = 14, 54%) |
| 3 = quite a bit                                     | (n = 8, 31%) |

Median = 2; Mean = 2.15; Standard Deviation = 0.67
Physical assistance continued

5. For each person you identified in question #2, how helpful was it to have them help you do something?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%ages of those who found the question applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = not at all helpful (n = 1, 4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = somewhat helpful (n = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = moderately helpful (n = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful (n = 4, 15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful (n = 5, 19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99 = missing (n = 1, 4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = not applicable (n = 15, 58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 4.5; Mean = 4.2; Standard Deviation = 1.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Coworker:                                      |
| 1 = not at all helpful (n = 0)                 |    |
| 2 = somewhat helpful (n = 0)                   |    |
| 3 = moderately helpful (n = 1, 4%)             | 6% |
| 4 = pretty helpful (n = 2, 8%)                 | 12%|
| 5 = very helpful (n = 13, 50%)                 | 77%|
| 99 = missing (n = 1, 4%)                       | 6% |
| 0 = not applicable (n = 9, 35%)                |    |
| Median = 5; Mean = 4.75; Standard Deviation = 0.58 |

| Employee:                                      |
| 1 = not at all helpful (n = 0)                 |    |
| 2 = somewhat helpful (n = 0)                   |    |
| 3 = moderately helpful (n = 0)                 |    |
| 4 = pretty helpful (n = 3, 12%)                | 27%|
| 5 = very helpful (n = 7, 27%)                  | 64%|
| 99 = missing (n = 1, 4%)                       | 9% |
| 0 = not applicable (n = 15, 58%)               |    |
| Median = 5; Mean = 4.7; Standard Deviation = 0.48 |

| Other:                                         |
| 1 = not at all helpful (n = 0)                 |    |
| 2 = somewhat helpful (n = 1, 4%)               | 17%|
| 3 = moderately helpful (n = 0)                  |    |
| 4 = pretty helpful (n = 2, 8%)                 | 33%|
| 5 = very helpful (n = 2, 8%)                   | 33%|
| 99 = missing (n = 1, 4%)                       | 17%|
| 0 = not applicable (n = 20, 77%)               |    |
| Median = 4; Mean = 4; Standard Deviation = 1.22 |
Appendix L
Social participation

1. Who are the people that you get together with at work to have fun or to relax?
   Supervisor: Yes (n = 15, 58%)  No (n = 11, 42%)
   Coworker: Yes (n = 21, 81%)  No (n = 5, 19%)
   Employee: Yes (n = 7, 27%)  No (n = 19, 73%)
   Other: Yes (n = 8, 31%)  No (n = 18, 69%)

2. Since your loved one passed on, which of these people did you actually get together with to have fun or to relax?
   Supervisor: Yes (n = 10, 39%)  No (n = 16, 61%)
   Coworker: Yes (n = 15, 58%)  No (n = 11, 42%)
   Employee: Yes (n = 4, 15%)  No (n = 22, 85%)
   Other: Yes (n = 5, 19%)  No (n = 21, 81%)

3. Since your loved one passed on, would you have liked:
   1 = a lot more opportunities to get together with people for fun and relaxation (n = 1, 4%)
   2 = a few more (n = 10, 39%)
   3 = this was about right (n = 14, 54%)
   4 = or fewer opportunities? (n = 1, 4%)

   Median = 3; Mean = 2.57; Standard Deviation = 0.64

4. How much do you think that you needed to get together with other people for fun and relaxation since your loved one passed on?
   1 = not at all (n = 4, 15%)
   2 = a little bit (n = 16, 62%)
   3 = quite a bit (n = 6, 23%)

   Median = 2; Mean = 2; Standard Deviation = 0.63
Social participation continued

5. How helpful was it to have fun and to relax with those people identified in question #2?

%ages of those who found the question applicable

Supervisor:
1 = not at all helpful (n = 0)
2 = somewhat helpful (n = 1, 4%) 10%
3 = moderately helpful (n = 1, 4%) 10%
4 = pretty helpful (n = 5, 19%) 50%
5 = very helpful (n = 3, 12%) 30%
0 = not applicable (n = 16, 62%)

Median = 4; Mean = 4; Standard Deviation = 0.9

Coworker:
1 = not at all helpful (n = 0)
2 = somewhat helpful (n = 0)
3 = moderately helpful (n = 1, 4%) 6%
4 = pretty helpful (n = 3, 12%) 19%
5 = very helpful (n = 12, 46%) 75%
0 = not applicable (n = 10, 39%)

Median = 5; Mean = 4.7; Standard Deviation = 0.6

Employee:
1 = not at all helpful (n = 0)
2 = somewhat helpful (n = 0)
3 = moderately helpful (n = 0)
4 = pretty helpful (n = 3, 11%) 75%
5 = very helpful (n = 1, 4%) 25%
0 = not applicable (n = 22, 85%)

Median = 4; Mean = 4.25; Standard Deviation = 0.5

Other:
1 = not at all helpful (n = 0)
2 = somewhat helpful (n = 1, 4%) 20%
3 = moderately helpful (n = 1, 4%) 20%
4 = pretty helpful (n = 1, 4%) 20%
5 = very helpful (n = 2, 8%) 40%
0 = not applicable (n = 21, 81%)

Median = 4; Mean = 3.8; Standard Deviation = 1.3
Appendix M
Organizational policies

1. When your loved one passed on, what company policies or programs were available to you to help you with your loss, such as bereavement leave, flex time, vacation pooling, etc.?  
   Bereavement leave: Yes (n = 22, 85%)  No (n = 4, 15%)  
   Flextime: Yes (n = 11, 42%)  No (n = 15, 58%)  
   Substitute help: Yes (n = 2, 8%)  No (n = 24, 92%)  
   Vacation pooling: Yes (n = 3, 12%)  No (n = 23, 88%)  
   Counseling: Yes (n = 16, 62%)  No (n = 10, 38%)  
   Other: Yes (n = 10, 39%)  No (n = 16, 61%)  

2. When your loved one passed on, which company policies did you use?  
   Bereavement leave: Yes (n = 20, 77%)  No (n = 6, 23%)  
   Flextime: Yes (n = 8, 31%)  No (n = 18, 69%)  
   Substitute help: Yes (n = 1, 4%)  No (n = 25, 96%)  
   Vacation pooling: Yes (n = 0)  No (n = 26, 100%)  
   Counseling: Yes (n = 7, 27%)  No (n = 19, 73%)  
   Other: Yes (n = 6, 23%)  No (n = 20, 77%)  

3. When your loved one passed on, would you have liked:  
   1 = a lot more policy options (n = 3, 12%)  
   2 = a few more policy options (n = 3, 12%)  
   3 = this was about right (n = 19, 73%)  
   4 = or less policy options?  

   Median = 3; Mean = 2.6; Standard Deviation = 0.7  

4. When your loved one passed on, how much do think that you needed those policies?  
   1 = not at all (n = 3, 12%)  
   2 = a little bit (n = 3, 12%)  
   3 = quite a bit (n = 20, 77%)  

   Median = 3; Mean = 2.6; Standard Deviation = 0.68
Organizational policies continued

5. How helpful was it to have those company policies available?

Organizational leave:
1 = not at all helpful (n = 1, 4%) 5%
2 = somewhat helpful (n = 0)
3 = moderately helpful (n = 1, 4%) 5%
4 = pretty helpful (n = 0)
5 = very helpful (n = 19, 73%) 90%
0 = not applicable (n = 5, 19%)

Median = 5; Mean = 4.7; Standard Deviation = 0.95

Flextime:
1 = not at all helpful (n = 0)
2 = somewhat helpful (n = 0)
3 = moderately helpful (n = 0)
4 = pretty helpful (n = 0)
5 = very helpful (n = 8, 31%) 100%
0 = not applicable (n = 18, 69%)

Substitute help:
1 = not at all helpful (n = 0)
2 = somewhat helpful (n = 0)
3 = moderately helpful (n = 0)
4 = pretty helpful (n = 0)
5 = very helpful (n = 1, 4%) 100%
0 = not applicable (n = 25, 96%)

Vacation pooling:
1 = not at all helpful (n = 0)
2 = somewhat helpful (n = 0)
3 = moderately helpful (n = 0)
4 = pretty helpful (n = 0)
5 = very helpful (n = 0)
0 = not applicable (n = 26, 100%)
Organizational policies continued

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<td>3 = moderately helpful</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 2, 8%) 29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 5, 19%) 71%</td>
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Median = 5; Mean = 4.7; Standard Deviation = 0.48

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<td>(n = 2, 8%) 29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 = pretty helpful</td>
<td>(n = 0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 = very helpful</td>
<td>(n = 5, 19%) 71%</td>
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<td>0 = not applicable</td>
<td>(n = 19, 73%)</td>
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</table>

Median = 5; Mean = 3.8; Standard Deviation = 1.95
Appendix N
Wrap-up questions

1. In terms of coping with your loss, was the general atmosphere of your workplace helpful or unhelpful?
   Helpful (n = 22, 85%)
   Unhelpful (n = 2, 8%)
   No response (n = 2, 8%)

2. Are there any differences that you can describe between the help and grief support you got from people at work compared to people outside your work?

3. Who have you received help from outside of your workplace?

4. For each person or group just listed, how much help and grief support have you received from each one?

   Family:
   1 = very little (n = 0)
   2 = a little (n = 0)
   3 = moderate amount (n = 4, 15%) 21%
   4 = some (n = 4, 15%) 21%
   5 = a great deal (n = 11, 42%) 58%
   0 = not applicable (n = 7, 27%)

   Median = 5; Mean = 4.37; Standard Deviation = 0.83

   Friends:
   1 = very little (n = 0)
   2 = a little (n = 1, 4%) 5%
   3 = moderate amount (n = 2, 8%) 11%
   4 = some (n = 4, 15%) 21%
   5 = a great deal (n = 12, 46%) 63%
   0 = not applicable (n = 7, 27%)

   Median = 5; Mean = 4.42; Standard Deviation = 0.9

   Church:
   1 = very little (n = 0)
   2 = a little (n = 1, 4%) 10%
   3 = moderate amount (n = 3, 12%) 30%
   4 = some (n = 0)
   5 = a great deal (n = 6, 23%) 60%
   0 = not applicable (n = 16, 62%)

   Median = 5; Mean = 4.1; Standard Deviation = 1.2
Wrap-up questions continued

%ages of those who found the question applicable

Support group:
1 = very little (n = 0)
2 = a little (n = 0)
3 = moderate amount (n = 0)
4 = some (n = 2, 8%) 25%
5 = a great deal (n = 6, 23%) 75%
0 = not applicable (n = 18, 69%)

Median = 5; Mean = 4.75; Standard Deviation = 0.46

Neighbor:
1 = very little (n = 1, 4%) 17%
2 = a little (n = 0)
3 = moderate amount (n = 1, 4%) 17%
4 = some (n = 3, 12%) 50%
5 = a great deal (n = 1, 4%) 17%
0 = not applicable (n = 20, 77%)

Median = 4; Mean = 3.5; Standard Deviation = 1.38

Significant other:
1 = very little (n = 0)
2 = a little (n = 0)
3 = moderate amount (n = 1, 4%) 11%
4 = some (n = 0)
5 = a great deal (n = 8, 31%) 89%
0 = not applicable (n = 17, 65%)

Median = 5; Mean = 4.8; Standard Deviation = 0.67

Other:
1 = very little (n = 0)
2 = a little (n = 2, 8%) 22%
3 = moderate amount (n = 1, 4%) 33%
4 = some (n = 2, 8%) 22%
5 = a great deal (n = 4, 15%) 44%
0 = not applicable (n = 17, 65%)

Median = 4; Mean = 3.89; Standard Deviation = 1.27
BIBLIOGRAPHY


