Negotiating Grief through Work-Life Relationships: A Qualitative Analysis of Bereaved Employees' Emotional Constraints, Organizational Roles and Responsibilities, and the Intersections of Social Support at Home and Work on Adjustment following Loss

by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to better understand the experience of bereaved individuals following their return to work, and the ways in which they communicatively negotiate their relationships at work and at home. One of the most salient facts of life is that everyone will all experience the death of a loved one. The amount, frequency, type, and recovery response for the bereaved may be vastly different, but inevitably everyone has to cope with death. Even though it is an integral part of life, the bereavement experience often is acknowledged as one of the most traumatic and stressful processes that occurs in individuals' lives (McHorney & Mor, 1988; Miller & McGowan, 1997). In fact, roughly 5% of the workforce is affected by the passing of a close family member each year, and this number excludes those who experience the deaths of close friends (Wojcik, 2000). Evidence suggests that bereavement affects the physical and mental health of survivors, many of whom are in the workforce (Bauer & Murray, 2018; Hazen, 2003, 2008, 2009; Wilson, Punjani, Song, & Low, 2019). In order to explore how work-life roles are integrated into the lives of bereaved individuals, this dissertation qualitatively analyzed 36 interviews with bereaved employees (12), cohabitants (12), and coworkers (12). Through the use of procedural coding (Saldaña, 2009) and emergent codes, this dissertation answered the five posited research questions and their sub-questions. The results of this analysis have numerous implications for social support, emotion at work, grief, and bereavement leave policy. The following dissertation delineates the significance of this research, the literature review providing rationale for study of bereaved employees, qualitative methodological design, analysis of the data, and conclusions about bereavement and work-life relationships.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Noni Peggy and Noni Flora. During the course of my doctorate both of them passed away. Therefore, over the course of this research I embodied the duality that my participants experienced. Even in death, both of my grandmothers left me with valuable knowledge and their fingerprints touch every part of this dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

One of the most salient facts of life is that we will all experience the death of a loved one. The amount, frequency, type, and recovery response for the bereaved may be vastly different, but inevitably we will all have to cope with death. Even though it is an integral part of life, the bereavement experience often is acknowledged as one of the most traumatic and stressful processes that occurs in individuals' lives (McHorney & Mor, 1988; Miller & McGowan, 1997). Evidence suggests that bereavement affects the physical and mental health of survivors, many of whom are in the workforce (Bauer & Murray, 2018; Bosticco & Thompson, 2005; McHorney & Mor, 1988; Pressman & Bonanno, 2007; Wilson, Punjani, Song, & Low, 2019). In fact, roughly 5% of the workforce is affected by the passing of a close family member each year, and this number excludes those who experience the deaths of close friends (Wojcik, 2000). Thus, annually a significant number of employees' work performance as well as physical and mental well-being is potentially affected by "normal" grief experiences and reactions (Eyetsemitan, 1998; Gibson, Gallagher, Jenkins, 2010). Even more potentially problematic are the grief experiences of workers whose loss is more traumatic, such as a murder or the death of a child. However traumatic the loss, most bereaved individuals have to go back to work very shortly after their loss.

Often employees are not guaranteed any bereavement leave at all. Currently no federal law requires employers to allow bereavement leave. Where it does exist, often it comes in the form of funeral leave, and the day of the funeral might be the only

contracted day that employees are allowed to take off work. Under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), employees may be entitled to twelve weeks of unpaid time off work to care for a loved one who is dying; however, FMLA does not provide any specified leave for those having lost a loved one. Typically, the amount of leave an organization provides an employee is from one to three days off, and whereas salaried employees may be paid, often hourly employees are not (Leave Policy, 2014). A Canadian organizational bereavement leave study noted that on average employees took 2.5 days off for bereavement leave (Wilson et al., 2019). Additionally, usually no distinction is made among types of death or potentially how traumatic the death might be for the employee (Leave Policy, 2014). Therefore, a mother who has just lost her three-year-old son in a car accident for which she feels responsible would have the same amount of potential leave as a middle- age worker who lost a parent to cancer.

Given the emotional and physical costs of bereavement, it is not surprising that the bereavement process has financial repercussions for management in the form of absenteeism, errors and missed opportunities, increased health costs, and injuries (Stein & Winokuer, 1989; Hazen, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2002). It has been estimated that the hidden grief costs for U.S. companies is up to $75 billion annually (James & Friedman, 2003). These costs may be related to the effects of employees returning to work too soon after loss as well as inappropriate or inadequate responses from employers (Naierman, 1996). This financial problem impacts not only American companies. For instance, a study conducted by The Irish Hospice Foundation found that 44% of organizations surveyed reported an increase in employee sick leave following bereavement, and though these

were mainly short-term absences for minor illnesses, the cost was estimated at €1.5 billion (Coughlan & Oswald, 2004). Not only does this research point to the need for better work-family policies regarding bereavement, it also suggests a need for organizational policies that allow for and possibly encourage coworker support post bereavement.

Organizational support for bereaved individuals is valuable not only in the form of bereavement leave and policies, but also in the provision of support by workplace friends and colleagues. Social support is composed of important communicative behaviors that most everyone has the ability to benefit from, and they may be specifically beneficial for those suffering grief or loss. Social support refers to the emotional, economic, and practical help or information given to individuals by significant others, such as friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers (House & Kahn, 1985). Social support research has shown that supportive communication can influence the quality of interpersonal relationships (Burleson, 1990; Cunningham & Barbee, 2000; Hart, Newell, & Olsen, 2003). Further, supportive communication influences various cognitive, affective, behavioral, and physiological processes related to physical and mental health (Brashers, Neidig, & Goldsmith, 2004; Floyd & Riforgiate, 2008). Social support has the ability to promote self-esteem and motivate healthy behaviors (Saltzman & Holahan, 2002) in the general population, and for bereaved individuals it may reduce grief symptoms and facilitate psychological adaptation following loss (Johnson, 1991; Reed, 1998; Thuen, 1997a, 1997b). Specifically, it has been argued that the effects of social support can be buffering for individuals' everyday lives (House, 1981). For example,

social support may buffer the extent to which an individual experiences sadness or despair due to divorce, illness or other negative events. However, the value of support for bereaved individuals is less clear, with some research showing that social support does not always buffer these individuals' experience of grief (Stroebe, Zech, Stroebe, & Abakoumin, 2005). Additionally, research into the effects social support has for stressed workers does not offer a clear picture of the processes by which social support might buffer stress experienced at work (Dormann & Zapf, 1999). Moreover, researchers have not examined the ways that social support may buffer stress for employees who are managing grief from a personal life event at work.

Social support researchers have primarily examined the provision and benefits of social support in close relationships; however, this work potentially could offer an intriguing and powerful lens through which to examine organizational relationships and outcomes bereaved individuals experience after they return to work. The lack of structural support for bereaved individuals in the form of leave fosters an environment where people are returning to work very shortly after experiencing their loss; therefore, it is likely that relationships with coworkers will be part of the grief experience. Better understanding the processes that enable social support to improve a bereaved employee's life at work and at home has intrinsic value.

Most bereaved individuals who do return to work primarily interact with coworkers for much of their day. It may often be the case that bereaved individuals spend more communicative time around coworkers than family and friends, depending on their work hours and the current state of their support systems at home. In addition, research

on bereaved parents has shown that because the whole family is suffering the loss, each member of the family unit's ability to support each other may become stifled (Riches & Dawson, 2000). Therefore, bereaved individuals' social networks may become the most important sources of support, and a very substantial part of many employees' social networks are their coworkers.

Most adults have to manage their roles and relationships both at work and at home, and often those roles and relationships cross over and impact each other. Public and private relationships are often blurred as many workers have personal romantic or friend relationships with their coworkers. Further, one's relationships at home may impact how one communicates with those at work. For example, a husband may encourage his wife to not communicate with or to dislike one of her coworkers who failed to acknowledge the loss of her mother. Although she may not have initially found it offensive, her husband may incite anger in her towards this coworker and thereby influence her communication at work. It may also be true that one person in a relationship may ask their partner to not discuss the loss of their parent with anyone at work because they believe it to be a private matter. Thus, the emotional experience of grief not only impacts the personal identity of bereaved individuals, but the management of the bereavement process has the ability to reflect, refract, and reframe their communication and their communicative environments both at home and at work.

Work-family balance has become a hot topic academically, in the workforce, and in the popular press. Understanding and improving the balance between paid work and individuals' lives outside of work has become a significant area of organizational

communication study as well (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005; Golden, Kirby, & Jorgenson, 2006; Kirby, Golden, Medved, Jorgenson, & Buzzanell, 2003; Kirby & Krone, 2002). It has been argued that work-family balance is necessary for a healthy functioning society (Halpern, 2005). In fact, 60% of working adults report difficulty balancing work and family life (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). The absence of this balance, often defined by increased work-family conflict, can negatively impact individuals' health and well-being (Frone, 2000; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Major, Klein, & Ehrhart, 2002) as well as organizational performance (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Fletcher and Bailyn (1996) argue that the two domains of work and family are inherently conceptualized by society and organizations as "competitive, adversarial arenas" (p. 258). Given that balancing these areas is taxing for individuals already, the added stress of bereavement likely significantly compounds their problems. However, few studies of work-life have examined the way individuals cope with personal grief and bereavement at work or how roles and relationships at home may assist or hinder those at work. Finally, research has been limited in theoretically assessing behavioral responses of the bereaved who return to work following loss and must now balance grief and work-related issues.

Traditionally work-family research has centered on the negative associations between work and family life (e.g., work–family conflict, Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1999); however, recently researchers have called for a more balanced approach to the work-family interface by studying the benefits of multiple role memberships (Frone, 2003; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). Organizational behavior researchers Greenhaus

and Powell's (2006) theory of work-family enrichment is particularly useful to understanding the positive benefits individuals' roles at home can have on their roles at work, and vice versa, following the loss of a loved one. Essentially, benefits may be derived from work relationships that are applicable to family relationships [(i.e., work-to-family enrichment (WFE)] or derived from family and applicable to work [(i.e., family-to-work enrichment (FWE)] (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; McNall, Nicklin, & Masuda, 2010). Given the array of negative psychological and physiological responses bereavement has for individuals, the bidirectional nature of enrichment may help identify the positive instrumental and affective resources individuals gain from relationships both at home and work. It may also be that one effective way to manage the negative effects of bereavement is to find a way to foster bi-directional enrichment and then studying those individuals who experience this type of enrichment through work and home life.

Unfortunately, much of the contemporary research and theory on work-life balance frames the negotiation of work-life roles as either providing conflict or providing resources to individuals managing their roles. It does not explore the ways that roles and relationships both at home and at work concurrently cause conflict *and* provide beneficial resources for individuals managing their work and home lives. In fact, this binary opposition limits work-life researchers' ability to fully understand the integrated ways humans experience each of the positive and negative communicative attributes garnered through each role. The reality is that work is both going to cause conflict and enrich our personal lives, and life is going cause conflict and enrich our work lives. Therefore, we need to be able to theoretically account for both simultaneously in order to understand the

multifaceted processes people utilize when communicating about work-life issues. However, part of the problem with this binary when it comes to work-life balance research is the methodological choices scholars have employed do not enable conceptualization of work-life issues as both complementary and in opposition.

Currently research on work-life relationships is conducted by researchers in many disciples, including communication. Work-life communication researchers generally have favored qualitative methods; typically, they have conducted interview studies that allow them to examine the processual challenges people face. On the other hand, management and organizational behavior scholars have primarily used quantitative surveys to assess work-family balance. For example, Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) theory of work-family enrichment has examined the positive ways that resources from one role enrich the another; however, methodologically this research has been limited to survey data.

I believe that a qualitative approach can effectively address the descriptive communicative processes that bereaved individuals encounter following loss as well as gain perspective into their relationships both at home and at work. An effective methodological approach is one that seeks multiple perspectives on bereaved individuals' work-life integration following loss. Work-life scholars have rarely incorporated participants from the target group's home and work lives. Consequently, a methodological gap exists that can be addressed by interviewing not only bereaved individuals about their relationships at work and home but also by interviewing members from their home and work lives in order to gain a more well-rounded view of work-life

integration for the bereaved. Additionally, this type of qualitative methodological design best reveals the complexity of work-family enrichment by exploring and comparing interview data on bereaved persons' relationships at home and work. Such an approach may provide a more nuanced perspective on the interconnectedness of support and utilization of resources for people who have lost a loved one and who cope with this loss both through and at work and home.

Overall, the aim of this research was to better understand the experience of bereaved individuals following their return to work and the ways in which they communicatively negotiate their relationships at work and at home. Many people currently experience the challenges related to maintaining a job while dealing with the loss of a loved one (Wilson, Rodríguez-Prat, & Low, 2020) and therefore, there was substantial practical significance for this research. Furthermore, the lack of institutional support from organizational policies regarding bereavement, the mixed findings about the ways in which social support enables coping for bereaved individuals, the fact that bereaved individuals are an at risk population for many stress related problems, and the existence of minimal research focusing on bereaved individuals at work provides ample rationale for this study. For these reasons, research examining the ways that bereaved individuals seek and receive support both at work and home is necessary to delineate the ways that support functions effectively across roles and may be utilized to provide effective communicative solutions to support bereaved individuals work-life challenges following their loss. Finally, this research sought to theoretically explore how work-life roles are integrated into the lives of bereaved individuals with the aim of better theorizing

about the merging of work with life and life with work. The following dissertation further delineates a review of literature on bereavement, social support, work-life conflict and enrichment, a detailed overview of the qualitative methodology employed, provides rich exemplars from the data that provide support for the assertions made about the research questions, and expounds a discussion of the results of this research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following review of literature provides a rationale for the study of bereaved individuals' experiences integrating their work-life roles. First a review of the bereavement experience is delineated, specifically focusing on grief and coping. Second, social support processes are examined for the general bereaved population, the ways social support has been studied at work, emotion at work, effective and ineffective support practices, and the behaviors of support providers. Third, work-family conflict is examined noting its historical dominance in the work-life balance research. Fourth, a review of work-life enrichment highlights a more positive lens to the study of work-life experiences. Fifth, I propose an alternative theoretical positioning to the conflict vs. enrichment literature and argue that integration is a more suitable and rewarding perspective.

Bereavement

Bereavement is the process one goes through after losing someone significant and is a process where individuals experience distress or emotional trauma following that loss (Bosticco & Thompson, 2005; McHorney & Mor, 1988; Pressman & Bonanno, 2007; Stroebe, Hansson, Stroebe & Shut, 2001; Stroebe, Stroebe, & Hansson, 1993). Bereavement is a complex emotional experience that may vary from mild and short-lived to extreme and long-lasting, occurring over months or years, and encompasses feelings of loneliness, despair, guilt, suicidal ideation (Stroebe (2011). The "significance" of the deceased individual can vary based the expectedness, type, and closeness of the

relationship between him or her and their surviving loved ones. The deaths of family members often cause distress or trauma, but the loss of a friend or even coworker may cause similar feelings for bereaved individuals (Bosticco & Thompson, 2005; Stroebe et al., 2001).

Extensive clinical research has been conducted on bereaved populations examining the broad range of physical and psychological health consequences associated with bereavement (Stroebe, 2011). Generally, bereaved individuals are at a higher risk of suffering from health-related problems compared to the non-bereaved (See Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2007). They report higher rates of illness and disability, medical use, and hospitalization than the non-bereaved (Stroebe, 2011). It is not surprising that bereaved individuals have an increased amount of sick leave (Coughlan & Oswald, 2004). In addition to physical ailments, bereaved individuals also experience and increased prevalence of psychiatric disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, and clinical depression (Stroebe, 2011). Many of the physical and psychological issues associated to bereavement can impact the grief process such that the anxiety disorders brought on by bereavement may isolate people from their social networks and extend their grieving process because they are not receiving needed support. Additionally, these issues may extend beyond bereaved individuals' internal health and wellness and complicate their relationships with others at home and work (Wilson et al., 2020), and in turn those relationships may further complicate their physical and mental health. Therefore, better understanding grief is necessary to examining the bereavement experience.

Grief

The usual emotional reaction to bereavement is grief. Grief is an affective emotional reaction when someone we love dies (Stroebe et al., 2001). The symptoms of grief are often those that complicate bereaved individuals' lives through physical and psychological ailments (Lindemann, 1944/1965). For example, a grieving person may be more tired and this tiredness results not only from the disruption of sleep, but additionally from the extreme expenditure of energy necessary to attempt to maintain control while experiencing disorientation and loss of control (Shapiro, 1993). The symbolic may also be connected to the physical through the "loss of important future experiences" (Shapiro, 1993, p. 11). For example, even if a child dies at ten years old, a bereaved parent will grieve over the loss of experiencing that child graduate from college. Although it may appear that grief is a highly negative emotion, it is also the natural experience and bodily response most individuals go through when someone they love dies. However, its intensity and duration can vary widely.

Although the vast number of bereaved individuals recover following a loss (Bonanno, 2004; Bonanno, Moskowitz, Papa, & Folkman, 2005), it is estimated that about 9% of bereaved individuals experience chronic grief (Raphael & Minkov, 1999). A review of the prevalence of the complicated grief process experienced among acutely bereaved individuals found a range of thirty-three percent to five percent (Middleton, Raphael, Martinek, & Misso, 1993). The following risk factors have been listed as affecting bereavement outcomes: the bereavement situation, the person, and the interpersonal context (Stroebe & Schut, 2001). Therefore, it is valuable not only for

medical personnel to identify and support bereaved individuals suffering from a chronic and complicated grief process, but also their families, friends, and coworkers who they are likely to seek out and utilize more frequently to cope through their loss.

Coping

Individuals cope with death and the subsequent bereavement process in very different ways, some more effectively than others. Coping is generally understood to encompass the cognitive and behavioral efforts people utilize to manage their internal and external demands that are viewed as taxing or exceeding their own resources (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986, p. 572). The grief associated with bereavement can become an overwhelmingly taxing process and find the bereaved individual struggling to cope with everyday experiences.

One of the coping strategies that helps individuals cope with bereavement is to talk about their loss experiences (Farber, 1990; Giannini, 2011; Hastings, 2000; Kramer, 1996-1997). Talking and being heard often combats the isolation and loneliness experienced by enabling the bereaved to describe their loss, the ways they are struggling, and even reminisce about the deceased loved one (Conant, 1996; Feezel & Shepherd, 1987). In this way, communication becomes a means to compensate for the loss by allowing the bereaved to express thoughts and emotions about their loved one who is no longer physically present (Feezel & Shepherd, 1987). Lattanzi and Hale (1984-1985) acknowledged that the sharing of grief may even transform individuals through reflexively understanding their grief process, triggers, and goals. For example, if a bereaved husband explains to his friend the times of the day that he feels sad he may also

be able to understand what triggers those feelings and channel those feelings into some form of positive connection to his deceased wife and foster a greater awareness of his emotional wellbeing.

Even though researchers have noted the value of communication in the grief process, bereaved people often find themselves reluctant to talk about their experience because of personal and cultural pressures (Farber, 1990). Many bereaved individuals may silence themselves because they believe talking about the death of a loved one is a personal and/or family matter and therefore will not seek support from those outside of the home. Generally, Americans are uncomfortable and avoid talking about death, as well as the expression of grieving as weakness (Irwin, 1991). This American cultural taboo over bereavement often compounds the bereaved persons' criticisms of their emotions during this time because they believe they are not supposed to feel the way they are feeling (Irwin, 1991). Grief is a natural feeling following loss; yet, American culture stifles the expression of this emotion in many aspects and relationships both at home and at work. Miller, Considine, and Garner (2007)) argue that even though grief might be a stifled emotion at work, it along with other emotions related to the loss inevitably appear to some degree in bereaved individuals' communication at work. Understanding the ways that grief filters into Americans' stifled communication at home and at work is valuable to ascertaining the coping needs they might have from their families, friends, organizations, and coworkers. Moreover, research has argued the need for and value of social support for those experiencing trauma (Breen & O'Connor, 2011). Given the physical and psychological ways that bereavement can be traumatic it is important to

further assess social support literature in order to understand the ways that it facilitates the processing of pain, experience of isolation, and movement toward recovery following bereavement.

Social Support

One of the most prominent theoretical perspectives on social support is that support reduces the effects of stress and stressful life events on individuals' health and wellness. Social support is conceptualized as "supportive communication: verbal (and nonverbal) behaviors intended to provide or seek help" (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002, p. 384). This theoretical perspective argues that this reduction in stress takes place either through the supportive actions of others (e.g. Cohen & McKay, 1984, stress-support matching hypothesis) or through the perception that support is available (e.g. appraisal theories). Social support may refer to the emotional, economic, and practical help or information given to individuals by significant others, such as friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers (House & Kahn, 1985). Specifically, supportive actions are argued to enhance coping and perceived availability of support allows individuals to appraise potentially dangerous, anxiety inducing, and/or threatening life situations as less stressful (Cohen, Underwood, & Gottlieb, 2000; Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Moos & Billings, 1982). Social support has also been argued as capable of reducing grief symptoms and facilitating psychological adaptation due to its ability to fulfill specific time-limited needs that arise during adverse life events (Cutrona, 1996; Johnson, 1991; Reed, 1998; Thuen, 1997a, 1997b). Often the needs of many bereaved people are specific

and related to the events surrounding the death, the grief that follows, and the way their lives have changed following the loss of their loved one.

House's (1981) typology of social support included four types: emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal. Emotional support is considered by both theorists and laypeople as a basic tenant to close personal relationships (Cunningham & Barbee, 2000). Emotional support comprises the communicative expression of caring, concern, love, or trust (House, 1981). Effective emotional support can benefit recipients by improving emotional states (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998), coping (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996), and even health (Wills & Fegan, 2001). Person centeredness is the degree to which effective emotional support can be assessed (Burleson, 2008). Person centered messages acknowledge, elaborate, legitimize, and contextualize the recipient's feelings and perspective (Burleson, 1994). Instrumental support includes aid provided by the supporter to the recipient that is tangible or material and may consist of time, money, or physical assistance (House, 1981). Physical proximity is an essential precondition for the availability of instrumental support (Dunkel-Schetter, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1987). Informational support is advice or helpful information that assuages stress of contextual issues, is beneficial when addressing challenges (House, 1981). Informational support may also aid in the reduction of uncertainty and increase individuals' and sense of control (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). More specifically, informational support may assist problem solving (Cutrona & Russell, 1990), reduce work-related stress (MacGeorge, Samter, & Gillihan, 2005), and help management of uncertainty about health-related matters (Brashers, Neidig, & Goldsmith, 2004). Finally, appraisal support provides useful

feedback for evaluation and can include social comparison (House, 1981). Appraisal support when enacted may provide new perspectives on problems (Goldsmith & Albrecht, 2011). The effectiveness of social support directly impacts individuals' ability to provide support for a bereaved person either at home or at work.

Social Support for the Bereaved

In general, the primary sources of social support for bereaved individuals are partners, family, friends, coworkers, and their wider social networks (Taylor, 2007), and the support they provide is often viewed as crucial in times of crisis (Breen & O'Connor, 2011). Accordingly, social support from family and friends has the ability to help or hinder people's grief related experiences. Whether social support is communicatively beneficial or detrimental depends upon the roles/responsibilities of each member in the family or social network, how close the family members are to one another, and how emotion is expressed and communicated within the family (Breen & O'Connor, 2011). In fact, the assumption that support from family and friends is one of the most significant moderators of bereavement outcomes or recovery processes has been widely accepted by bereavement practitioners and researchers (e.g., Lopata, 1973; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987; Stylianos & Vachon, 1993). However, few studies have actually tested this assumption and of those that have, the emergent pattern is inconsistent (Greene & Feld, 1989; Krause, 1986; Murphy, Chung, & Johnson, 2002; Norris & Murrell, 1990; Schwarzer, 1992; Stroebe, Stroebe, Abakoumkin & Schut, 1996).

The mixed research on social support for bereaved individuals leaves an uncertain shadow regarding the ways in which it is beneficial for this population. Krause (1986)

found that high levels of social support appeared to reduce somatic symptoms such as appetite and sleep loss but had little impact on the core symptoms of grief, sadness and loneliness. A cross-sectional study of widows found a marginally significant reverse buffering effect (i.e. enhanced their grief symptoms) with widows who had more social support (Greene & Feld, 1989). A longitudinal study comparing two groups, 1) widows and 2) married men and women, found that less depression was associated with higher levels of social support for the bereaved group, yet there was no evidence showing social support protected bereaved individuals against harmful impact of losing a loved one or that it accelerated recovery (Stroebe et al., 1996). The implication here being that although more social support lessened depression, the initial impact of the loss was not buffered by social support, neither was the speed at which the bereaved recovered. Murphy et al. (1992) studied perceived social support for parents who lost an adolescent child and found that social support had no effect on the rate of change in distress over time. Another longitudinal study of bereaved individuals who ruminated over the emotional aspects of loss found that emotional social support had a positive effect for bereaved individuals' well-being, yet it did not affect their recovery any differently than those who received low emotional social support (Nolen–Hoeksema & Davis, 1999). Therefore, although those who ruminated and received emotional support felt better, they did not recover any faster than those who received less support. Finally, Stroebe et al. (2005) found that social support had a positive effect for bereaved individuals' depressive symptoms, but found no indication that there was a buffering effect of receiving social

support. These mixed results show that although social support might lessen depressive symptoms it does not the challenges faced by the loss.

This research, primarily found in clinical psychology studies, paints a complex picture of the ways in which social support may or may not effectively help individuals through their recovery process in their personal life. The nuanced ways in which some aspects of social support might decrease depressive symptoms or well-being are not identified nor are the negatives. If social support does not always work, why and when does it not facilitate recovery or buffer the challenges associated with loss? Further, these studies do not take in account when and who of the bereaved wanted or sought out social support. Is it also that unsolicited support may not necessarily be productive and thus ineffective? These answers are ones that are better suited to be studied through in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis. Given that all of these studies were quantitative, the mixed results might be found in a more descriptive analysis that takes account of the complex process of communication. Dyregrov (2004) argues that we need to better understand competent forms of communication when in adverse life situations because this will improve social support for bereaved populations. Not only would more competent communication with bereaved individuals produce improved support at home, but also at work.

Social Support at Work

Much of the research on social support for bereaved individuals has focused on their experiences with emotional support as opposed to informational or instrumental support, and most often outside of the workplace. Although people might expect their

close family/friend relationships to provide the best support following loss, research has shown that often those individuals are also experiencing grief and are not the best sources of support (Riches & Dawson, 2000). In a study on bereaved parents, Giannini (2011) found that many parents found coworkers or acquaintances very supportive and some noted that family and friends disappeared following their loss. Since bereavement often impacts personal relationships, it is quite probable that it affects workplace relationships and those workplace relationships may be ones providing positive and negative support. If the bereavement experience negatively impacts workplace relationships, it can result in bereaved employees feeling unsupported in their connection to work and commitment to the organization may decrease (Charles-Edwards, 2009). Although organizational norms about how to respond to bereaved employees may stifle appropriate and supportive modes of behavior, the way that organizational members respond can play a significant role in how bereaved workers manage their grief (Charles- Edwards, 2009). Work is often a site of social support (Gibson et al., 2010). In fact, the workplace is many people's primary social world and source of support outside the home (Gibson et al., 2010). Charles-Edwards (2009) argues that the workplace provides an element of stability and familiarity, as well as discomfort, during an unpredictable time in a bereaved individual's life. Although social support at work seems to be a prevalent experience for individuals, little research actually addresses support for the bereaved at work. More often social support research in workplace relationships has focused on the reduction of stress.

Multiple studies have found protective benefits and buffering effects of social support between coworkers, and although it may be possible that personal relationships do not buffer bereaved populations experience with loss, workplace relationships have the potential to buffer stress at work for bereaved individuals. Perceived social support in workplace relationships has been related to lower levels of work stress, lessened perceived occupational stress (Holder & Vaux, 1998), lower reports of role conflict, role ambiguity, and work overload when managers provided high support, (Swanson & Power, 2001), and lower negative affect and higher positive affect (Swanson & Power, 2001). Although multiple studies (for meta-analysis see Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999) have shown buffering effect for perceived social support at work, these studies often exclude specific types of stressors such as work stress, and some of the results of these studies on the buffering effect of social support on work stress reveal contradictory results (Dormann & Zapf, 1999). Specifically, depressive symptoms increased due to social stressors under low-support conditions and depressive symptoms were reduced by social stressors under high-support conditions (Dormann & Zapf, 1999). Moreover, the virtually nonexistent empirical research on employees' experience of support (either positive or negative) from coworkers following a personal loss and the vast number of employees managing grief at work every day represents a gap in research on the communicative experience of bereaved individuals.

Emotion at Work

Communication researchers have termed the process of experiencing emotions from home life at work as *emotion at work*, or emotions unrelated to work experiences

(Miller et al., 2007). Similar to the Weick's (1969) concept of partial inclusion, "Individuals are more than just their work roles—they are also friends, spouses, parents, children, church members, political activists, hobbyists, sports fans, and the list could go on and on" (Miller et al., 2007, p. 237). Subsequently when a bereaved individual is at work, he or she is not "contained in the boxes on organizational charts" (Weick, 1969, p. 252), but are much more likely to express their grief, sadness, anger, guilt, etc. over the loss of their loved one.

There is a plethora of research that focuses on various types of emotion related to the workplace, (i.e. emotion labor, emotional work) (Miller et al., 2007), yet emotion at work has garnered less attention. There is a host of research targeting the challenges balancing public and private life (e.g. Kirby & Krone, 2002; Medved, 2004), however there are very few studies focusing on the relationships between grief and the workplace Hazen (2008). Of the research that has examined the experience and expression of grief at work, the limited research as focused on the ways it has typically been stifled (Eyetsemitan, 1998; Hazen 2003).

Expressing personal emotions, notably grief, in the public organization is often suppressed (Eyetsemitan, 1998; Hazen 2003; Miller et al., 2007). The bureaucratic system perpetuates the notion that employees must be rational and control emotions in order to have an effective organizational life (Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Yet, the reality is that emotions from our personal lives infiltrate into our organizations. Not only do we experience grief over losses we share at work with our coworkers, but we bring with us grief from our personal lives. Therefore, many bereaved individuals may come to work

and have very few, if any coworkers acknowledge their loss or grief. Often because organizational norms are at odds with bereaved individuals' healthy process to work through grief, those employees are likely to suffer from lack of support (Bento, 1994; Doka, 1989; Eyetsemitan, 1998). Grief that exists in and around the workplace is often not recognized by the organization or the organizational members (Vickers, 2009). Research has indicated that the expression of grief at work is informed by the organizational space, specifically grief expression may be constrained by gender, work status, relationships, and identity (Bauer & Murray, 2018). Often, the way bereavement, grief, and loss are facilitated at work are through occupational health and safety issues (Ellis, 2004). Research suggests that medical treatment side effects, concurrent career responsibilities, and colleagues undertaking extra tasks in order to support each other may potentially result in bereaved employees (and possibly other employees) feeling tired, distracted, and moody, all of which may negatively impact workplace relationships and performance (Pawlecki, 2010). Therefore, the inability of organizations to properly address and support bereaved employees' grief provides a rationale for the examination of the ways that bereaved employees' grief can be stifled at work. It may also reveal the alternative communicative practices of coworkers that enable the expression of grief at work, the ways employees *do* express their grief at work, and perhaps most importantly the ways in which social support for grief expression is effective and ineffective.

Effectiveness and Ineffectiveness of Social Support

Research has shown that highly effective types of support are those that not only match the type of support needed in context but that also provide quality support. One of

the most distinguishing features of an effective message is one that is highly person-centered in orientation. Person centeredness refers to a message's ability to reflect awareness of and to adapt to subjective, affective, and relational aspects of interaction (Burleson, 1987). Messages low in person centeredness might criticize others feelings, deny the legitimacy of their feelings, or tell them how they should act or feel (MacGeorge, Feng, & Burleson, 2011). Highly person-centered messages explicitly legitimize others' feelings by helping them articulate their own feelings or helping them place their feelings in the broader context of the situation (MacGeorge, Feng, & Burleson, 2011). Research has shown that highly person-centered messages do a better job of reducing emotional distress (Jones, 2004; Jones & Guerrero, 2001), and over the long-term parents' and peers' person-centered messages predict a developing child's social, cognitive and functional communication skills (Applegate, Burleson, & Delia, 1992; Burleson & Kunkel, 2002). Even though moderators have been shown to affect person centeredness (e.g., gender, ethnicity, cognitive complexity), the main effect of person centeredness substantially outweighs the effects of the moderators (Bodie & Burleson, 2008). Thus, it appears the supportive person-centered message is more powerful than other types of person-related factors. Consequently, person-centered messages might better predict the way that social support facilitates the recovery processes of bereaved people over the long term. Additionally, when person-centered messages of emotional support are communicated at work regarding loss or work challenges, bereaved individuals might show positive affect and feel more positively, in addition to an array of other factors related to well-being. On the contrary, coworkers'

messages that convey that bereaved individuals should leave their baggage at home, or friends' and family's messages that deny the legitimacy of their complaints made at home about work, might exacerbate feelings of isolation and loneliness related to their grief.

Research has also shown that effective messages of support are those related to esteem support and advice giving. Generally, emotion-focused/inductive messages are viewed as better than problem-focused/assertive messages for outcomes related to self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy, and feelings of acceptance (Holmstrom & Burleson, 2011). For example, esteem support and advice giving typically allow bereaved individuals to avoid feeling judged and also enable feelings of self-efficacy that are needed to overcome work or home-related conflicts or challenges. Similarly, advice-giving messages should consider the face needs of the receiver; for example, mitigating messages are preferred to bald-on-record statements (Feng & Burleson, 2008; Goldsmith, 1999). Further, the order in which advice is given also influences the way a person responds to it. For example, unsolicited advice may be viewed as intrusive, unsupportive, and face threatening (Goldsmith, 2000) while people who solicit advice are more receptive to it and evaluate it more positively (MacGeorge, Feng, Butler, & Budarz, 2004). Overall, providers of support must attend to a variety of issues when communicating with those in need.

Providers of Social Support

Even though social support research has clearly identified that a large portion of a successful message depends on the support provider, little research has examined providers of social support. Research has shown that when support providers' assistance

is rejected, they experience negative affect and create negative views of the person who needs aid (Cheuk & Rosen, 1993), and when helpers are repeatedly rejected, they are more likely to become disinterested in offering further help (Wong, Cheuk, & Rosen, 2007). In the workplace, this pattern could result in coworkers viewing bereaved individuals who reject their help more negatively and result in further isolating them from the rest of the workplace. However, when support providers receive expressions of gratitude from support recipients, they typically have a positive interactional experience (Wood, Maltby, Gillett, Linley, & Joseph, 2008), and laboratory studies show that helpers who receive thankful responses are more willing to help out the original recipient as well as help out others (Grant & Gino, 2010). Therefore, if bereaved individuals' express gratitude for familial support, they might foster a communicative environment that supports other grieving individuals in the household.

Research suggests that a plethora of possible benefits accrue to individuals who receive social support. However, little of this research directly addresses social support for bereaved populations. Most notable is the limited research and conceptual understanding of support for those who are bereaved and return to work. Although researchers have identified that effective messages include emotional support (person centeredness), face saving, and the proper order of support advice (what advice is offered first vs. what is given later in the supportive episode), there lacks data on the effective use of support for bereaved populations as well as an understanding of the interactional process of providing support. Because research suggests that the bereaved person is more vulnerable than the average individual, better understanding the process and effectiveness

of support at work through coworker relationships, and the effectiveness of support from relationships at home regarding work related stress, is of great empirical need. From the aforementioned literature on social support the following research questions were posited:

RQ1: In what ways do bereaved individuals express emotion at work?

RQ2: How are bereaved individuals supported at work by coworkers?

a. What are effective behaviors used by coworkers?

b. What are ineffective behaviors used by coworkers?

c. How do coworkers negotiate their use of social support?

RQ3: In what ways do bereaved individuals' relationships at home provide support for work-related stress?

Research is clear that bereaved individuals need multiple types of support and relationships. All people experience loss and grief, and individuals at work are not exempt from those experiences; consequently, these emotions influence the bereaved and their coworkers. Additionally, the bereaved are not protected from the everyday challenges and frustrations that work entails, and they bring those challenges back home with them to families that often are suffering the same loss. The many obstacles bereaved individuals face when juggling home and work life makes for a communicative terrain ripe for conflict to emerge.

Work-Family Conflict

Until the early 2000s, work-family research focused on conflict. Historically, and most frequently, researchers have viewed work–family balance as the absence of work–

family conflict, or as a result of a reduction in the frequency and intensity with which work interferes with family or family interferes with work (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2001). Therefore, the work family literature had examined these issues from a conflict perspective (Barnett, 1998; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Haas, 1999). This focus on conflict derives from a scarcity hypothesis, one that assumes individuals have a fixed amount of time and energy in their daily life which can lead to conflict over how time is apportioned (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Early research in the work-family literature sought to investigate the antecedents of work-family conflict. Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connolly (1983) argued that individual stress within one role may produce conflict between it and another role. Further, exposure to stress in one domain may lead to irritability, fatigue, or preoccupation with the problems in that role that limit individuals' ability to meet the requirements of another role (Greenhaus & Beutell,1985). Researchers who support the conflict perspective assert that individuals who participate in numerous roles (such as work and family) are inevitably going to experience conflict between the roles as well as stress that degrades their quality of life and that places demands on their time, energy, and commitment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). For example, bereaved widowers could experience work-family conflict when the pressure to work overtime impedes their ability to be home to take their children to dance rehearsal, or baseball practice, making participation in one role a hindrance to their participation in another role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). These competitive work demands foster two directions of work-family conflict: interference of work with family and interference of family with work. Based on

this assumption, researchers invested considerable time assessing the ways that multiple roles conflict, and results from several meta-analyses indicate that high levels of work–family conflict have negative consequences for individuals, including lower job and life satisfaction, greater turnover intentions, increased general psychological strain, higher somatic/physical symptoms, higher depression, and increased burnout (Allen et al. 2000; Byron 2005; Kossek & Ozeki 1998). Considering that bereavement is an already stressful experience that often has negative consequences for people's wellbeing, it might be assumed that there would be ample research on individuals who have suffered loss and the conflict that is fostered through the management of work-family roles, yet there is not.

Although it is clear that work-family conflict creates many challenges both interpersonally and physiologically, to utilize only this perspective on work-family relationships limits the possibility that challenges may be rewarding and that multiple roles may offer positive benefits for the bereaved. In multiple literature reviews, writers have noted the preoccupation with conflict and stress and called for a more balanced approach, one that recognizes the positive effects of merging work and family roles (Barnett, 1998; Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). This substantial gap in the literature on positive experiences of merging work-family relations minimizes also ignores the communicative impact that positive spillover (Grzywacz, Almeida, & McDonald, 2002), enhancement (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002; Tiedje et al., 1990), and facilitation (Frone, 2003; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004) have on individuals' lives and identities. This is why a comprehensive framework of the positive

effects of merging work and family roles may enrich our understanding of the ways that bereaved individuals benefit from both environments.

Work-Family Enrichment

Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) integrative theory of work-family enrichment is a direct response to previous research delineating conflict between work and home life. The purpose of their theory is to present a theory of work-family enrichment that articulates conditions whereby work and family roles are "allies" rather than "enemies" (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Their research is based on prior theorists' work such as Siebel's (1974) theory of role accumulation that explains why individuals may choose to participate in multiple roles and Marks' (1977) expansionist approach that argues that some roles produce positive effects for other roles.

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) assert that enrichment is "the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role" (p. 73). Their model expands the number of resources generated in one role, that offer benefits to a second role, and they propose that work–family enrichment happens via two paths, an instrumental path and an affective path (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; McNall, Nicklin, & Masuda, 2010). Greenhaus and Powell (2006) argue that role experiences offer five categories of resources that may be acquired through the relationships and different roles we have at work and home. These five categories are made up of skills and perspectives (e.g., interpersonal skills, coping skills), psychological and physical resources (e.g., self-efficacy, optimism), social-capital resources (e.g., networking, information), flexibility (e.g., flextime), and material resources (e.g., money, presents). Through these resources

improved performance may occur in the other role either directly (instrumental path) or indirectly (affective path). For example, bereaved individuals could experience improved performance in their role at home if they get a promotion at work that enables them more flexibility to work from home and be with their children.

Instrumental Path

Through the instrumental path, different types of resources are transferred directly from one role (A) to another (B). For example, optimism and hope cultivated in Role A can promote effective performance in Role B through increasing persistence and resilience when faced with failure and challenge (Seligman, 1991). Using the context of bereavement, if a social worker loses her mother, she may gain better insight into how her clients deal with the death of their parents and subsequently perform better in her social worker role.

Moderators to the Instrumental Path

Work-family enrichment through the instrumental path necessitates that a resource generated in one role be applied to the other and that this application leads to higher performance in the second role. Greenhaus & Powell (2006) argue that generally the decision to apply a resource from Role A to Role B and vice versa is intentional, with the exception of psychological and physical resources (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Therefore, individuals are most likely to transfer a resource from Role A to Role B when Role B is highly relevant and when they believe the resource is pertinent to Role B (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). However, attaining high performance is determined by whether the resource is compatible with the demands of Role B, not the mere application

(Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). For example, a student in college may learn in a family therapy class about typical behaviors bereaved individuals experience and ways to support family members after the loss of a loved one. However, once a family member dies, her acquired knowledge may not be compatible with her role as a child in the family because her family is authoritarian and older generations are the ones designated to provide advice. Thus, the skill she developed at school cannot improve her performance in her role at home.

Affective Path

Affect entails moods, affective states not related to a specific stimulus, and emotions, (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Greenhaus and Powell (2006) argue that when individuals receive widespread resources from one role, positive affect in that role increases, which, in turn, facilitates functioning in the other role. However, this model of work-family enrichment does not distinguish between the two components of affect (moods vs. emotions) and instead views positive affect as including positive moods and emotions garnered from role experiences (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). It would be interesting to see how these role experiences impact distinct emotions at home or at work as compared to longer non-episodic moods in individuals who have lost a loved one. It may also be that although widespread resources may positively impact a person's affect, further clarification about what resources may more directly be related to moods vs. emotions is relevant for employees dealing with the complex process of grief.

Moderators to the Affective Path

The affective path has two different components; 1) resources generated in one role promote positive affect in the other role, and 2) positive affect in one role increases performance in the other role. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) suggest that the second component of the affective path is moderated by the salience of Role B. For example, "general tendencies to be available, engaged, and energetic in a role translate into attention and absorption in another role only when they provide a significant source of self-identity" (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 96). For instance, a widow might research best practices for raising her daughter without her father and feel effective in her ability to raise her child alone. This may cause her to feel proud as a mother; however, this pride likely is not salient to her role as a janitor, and, therefore, her performance may not increase.

Work-family enrichment is relatively new; however, McNall et al. (2010) more recently compiled the existing studies related to work-life enrichment in a meta-analysis and found a number of benefits related to work-family enrichment as proposed by (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). First, it found that both work-to-family enrichment and family-to-work enrichment are positively associated with work-related outcomes, namely job satisfaction and affective commitment. For example, resources gained at work and utilized at home and vice versa tend to support employees' commitment and enjoyment of work. Second, enrichment is positively related to family and life satisfaction. Third, enrichment is beneficial for physical and mental health. McNall et al.'s (2010) meta-analysis provides ample support for the continued use of this theory to ameliorate the

dichotomous nature of work-family conflict research that implies the management of work-family roles yields primarily negative consequences for individuals. Although none of these studies involved bereaved populations, this research is promising in that it identifies potential beneficial resources that bereaved individuals can acquire at work or at home that may assist their role in the other environment. The main limitation of these studies is that they use survey data and point to correlations between enrichment and work-life issues, yet they do not provide descriptive information needed to explain how resources from work are enacted at home. Given the complex nature of the bereavement process, it is valuable to identify how resources from one role may be effective in managing and supporting the other role. Therefore, a qualitative methodology would be able to explain how social capital resources gained at work communicatively benefit a bereaved person's relationships at home. Utilizing qualitative methods will provide further detail as to how resources are effective, but more importantly why and to what extent they are effective in specific scenarios.

Work-life Integration

The current literature on work-life relationships and challenges is mired by pitting a focus on the conflict it creates vs. the ways that it can benefit individuals. Researchers have either focused on one aspect or the other. Although traditionally more research has focused on the negative and conflicting nature of managing dual roles in work/life, the research currently examining positive benefits that cross over between these roles fails to also indicate the ways in which conflict can be detrimental to individuals. In order to better theorize about work-life relationships, it is necessary to understand the processes

that enhance the positive and sustain or foster the negative aspects of merging work-life roles. Further, current scholarship does not take into account the possibility that one role may both enrich and degrade our lives. For example, an individual could acquire more knowledge about computers at work, which enables her to perform better at work and to assist her family at home, thus facilitating higher performance in her family role. However, at the same time, someone else in the family may fancy himself as the computer guru and become envious of the newly acquired skill and create conflict because his role was challenged. Although this might be thought of as a trivial example, it opens up the possibility that one resource may not necessarily contribute to only conflict or enrichment, but both at the same time and perhaps within the same role. Based on current research and theory on work-life issues, the following questions were posed:

RQ4a: How do resources generated from work benefit individuals' role at home?

RQ4b: How do limited resources generated at work hinder bereaved individuals' role at home?

RQ5a: How do resources generated at home benefit bereaved individuals' role at work?

RQ5b: How do responsibilities generated at home hinder bereaved individuals' role at work?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

This research was designed to explore the communicative experiences and behaviors of bereaved individuals. More specifically, this research aimed to assess the supportive behaviors that the bereaved receive at work and at home and to examine the ways those behaviors impact work and/or home roles. Further, it was the goal of this research to uncover the ways in which bereaved individuals' workplace and personal life resources either improve or worsen their experience in each role, as well as to better understand the social environment that facilitates supportive behaviors. Finally, the purpose of this project was to better delineate the communicative ways that bereaved individuals experience the challenges and rewards of an integrated work-life experience. The following methodology explicates the qualitative research design, including sampling and recruitment, participants, interviewing, and data analysis.

Sampling and Recruitment

Given that the goal of this research was to understand the experiences of bereaved individuals following their return to work as well as their negotiation of work-life roles and relationships, the targeted population were individuals who have suffered and/or were experiencing loss. Participants could have experienced multiple types of loss (partner, sibling, child, parent, friend, etc.). Two types of sampling were utilized to gather participants. First, typical instance sampling targeting individuals who have suffered loss and returned to work. Typical instance sampling helps researchers target participants who are typical to the phenomenon being studied (Tracy, 2012). Although the experience of

loss and returning to work is widely understudied, it is nonetheless a very common experience and one that requires a specific group of individuals coping with the challenges of work-life integration following loss. Second, snowball sampling was utilized to further gather more participants. Snowball sampling is a helpful sampling method utilized for reaching difficult-to-access populations (Tracy, 2012). Although we interact with bereaved individuals regularly, many of them do not talk about their loss openly with strangers and may prefer to talk to others who have suffered a similar experience. Snowball sampling enabled me to acquire references from participants who had already interviewed with me and assured potential participants that the experience was one that was safe, open, and possibly beneficial should they chose to interview as well. Additionally, since I was interested in understanding relationships to the bereaved from home and work, snowball sampling enabled the initial targeted bereaved person to connect me with someone from their home and work-life.

A number of recruitment steps were taken in order to gather the three different types of participants needed for the study (the bereaved, a cohabitant, and coworkers of the bereaved). First, approval to conduct the study was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Second, recruitment scripts/flyers approved by the IRB (Appendix A) that sought individuals who had suffered loss and returned to work within the last year and a half were distributed to personal contacts by email and posted on social networking sites (Facebook and Instagram). Although it is quite possible to experience emotional trauma well after a year and a half post-loss, this timeframe allowed me to elicit descriptive responses from participants closer to their initial return to work with the aim

that these descriptions would be fresher in their memory. Third, recruitment scripts/flyers were sent to family, friends, organizational Listservs, and instructors at a large southwestern university. Fourth, local bereavement support groups and organizations were contacted and emailed recruitment scripts/flyers. Over the course of recruitment three participant groups (9 individuals) were gathered from postings on social Media Sites, three participant groups (9 individuals) were gathered through organizational Listservs and family/friends, and six participant groups (18 individuals) were gathered through snowball sampling. Fifth, after initial contact was made with potential participants, I either emailed or had a phone call with potential participants to determine whether they had cohabitants and coworkers who were also willing to participate in an interview. Ultimately, eight interested potential interviewees could not participate in this study because they did not meet the requirements of working in a typical organizational setting. Sixth, once participants were selected, they were given the option to be interviewed at a place of their choosing or over the phone. This resulted in a total of six interviews being conducted in person and thirty conducted over the phone. Of those thirty interviews, four participants chose to use FaceTime and twenty-six chose standard telephonic communication.

Participants

Three different groups of participants were recruited for this project; the bereaved employee, a cohabitant, and a coworker. Tracy (2010) argues that research should include multiple voices and member reflections of experience. Since the goal of this research was to understand the communicative environment at home and at work for individuals who

have suffered loss, it made sense to hear not only from the bereaved themselves, but also from individuals in their work and home lives. This choice was made to ultimately achieve a "well-executed and completed analysis that can 'capture,' identify, locate, or represent participants' positions and perspectives" (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010, p. 5). The choice of having participants from bereaved survivors' home and work lives fostered richer data that offered multiple perspectives on the work-life experience following loss. It also served to garner perspectives on statements made by one group member interviewee about another interviewee or experiences they both shared.

Given that participation in this study was dependent upon the willingness of the bereaved individuals' social networks to participate, the number of bereaved participants studied was limited. A total of 12 bereaved individuals were included in this research. I required that one member of each participant's home life and one member of her or his work life be willing to participate. This meant that 12 cohabitants were interviewed and another 12 coworkers were included. A total of 36 participants were interviewed for this research. In order to keep track of all the participant groups and recognize which participants' data were connected, each participant group was given a number 1 through 12 (these numbers were generated chronologically from the first interview group conducted to the last). Each participant was then given a letter: a (bereaved employee), b (cohabitant), c (coworker). A document was created at the beginning of the data collection that connected each relationship group (see Table 1.). This research was exempt through the IRB, therefore all data had to be anonymous. All real names were removed and replaced with pseudonyms and any personal information that could link

data to participants was changed or removed. Creating a number/letter system ensured data was not lost or confused across groups and also served as a helpful key when reviewing the results and conclusions.

Table 1

Relationship Groups

Group 1	**Name**	**Relationship**
1.a. Bereaved Individual	Stacy	Bereaved
1.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Sean	Husband
1.c. Coworker	Mary	Coworker (lateral)
Group 2	**Name**	**Relationship**
2.a. Bereaved Individual	Janelle	Bereaved
2.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Bob	Husband
2.c. Coworker	Larry	Coworker (lateral)
Group 3	**Name**	**Relationship**
3.a. Bereaved Individual	Alice	Bereaved
3.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Molly	Daughter
3.c. Coworker	Kathy	Coworker (lateral)
Group 4	**Name**	**Relationship**
4.a. Bereaved Individual	Lynne	Bereaved
4.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Glenn	Husband
4.c. Coworker	Mark	Coworker (lateral)

Group 5	**Name**	**Relationship**
5a. Bereaved Individual	John	Bereaved
5.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Marissa	Sister/Roommate
5.c. Coworker	Crystal	Manager
Group 6	**Name**	**Relationship**
6.a. Bereaved Individual	Anthony	Bereaved
6.b. Cohabitant Relationship	McKenzie	Best Friend/roommate
6.c. Coworker	Aaron	Coworker (lateral)
Group 7	**Name**	**Relationship**
7.a. Bereaved Individual	Steven	Bereaved
7.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Lori	Wife
7.c. Coworker	James	Manager
Group 8	**Name**	**Relationship**
8.a. Bereaved Individual	Joe	Bereaved
8.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Claudia	Wife
8.c. Coworker	Mitch	Manager (other Dept.)
Group 9	**Name**	**Relationship**
9.a. Bereaved Individual	Christie	Bereaved
9.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Alex	Husband
9.c. Coworker	Monica	Coworker (lateral)

Group 10	**Name**	**Relationship**
10.a. Bereaved Individual	Julie	Bereaved
10.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Bill	Son
10.c. Coworker	Lauren	Coworker (subordinate)
Group 11	**Name**	**Relationship**
11.a. Bereaved Individual	Melanie	Bereaved
11.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Curt	Husband
11.c. Coworker	Jill	Coworker (lateral)
Group 12	**Name**	**Relationship**
12.a. Bereaved Individual	Aaron	Bereaved
12.b. Cohabitant Relationship	Mike	Best Friend/roommate
12.c. Coworker	Caitlyn	Coworker (lateral)

Bereaved Employees

As stated, a total of 12 bereaved employees were included in this study. Please refer to Table 2.a. for a demographic breakdown. The average age of bereaved employees was about 49 years old. A total of 7 females and 5 males were interviewed. Each participant was asked to self-identify their race or ethnicity at the end of the interview. From this data, 7 bereaved participants identified as white, 4 identified as Latina/o, and one identified as black. This study was open to multiple types of relational loss and resulted 8 participants who lost their parents, 2 lost siblings, 1 lost a grandparent, and 1 lost their long-term romantic partner. Since the majority of the participants lost a parent, the average age of the deceased individual was 72 years old. Of those deaths, bereaved

participants identified that 6 of them were sudden or unexpected (car accident) and 6 were expected (old age or prolonged illness). The average time from the death to the interview was 10 months. A requirement of participations was that all bereaved employees had to work in an organizational facility. A total of 7 bereaved participants were in management or had a management title and 5 held subordinate positions. Although four of the participants were in education (2 elementary teachers and 2 college instructors), which does not have as clear a manager/subordinate relationship, these participants are considered subordinates based on their relationship to management (principles, professors, etc.). Each participant had some paid bereavement leave. Two of the participants did not know what the leave policy was at the time of the death, but confirmed at the interview that they did have paid bereavement leave days. On average each bereaved employee had 3 paid bereavement days off whether or not they used all of them for the loss discussed during the interview.

Cohabitant Relationships

A total of 12 participants were interviewed that were cohabitants of bereaved employees. Please refer to Table 2.b. for a demographic breakdown. In many cases these individuals may have also been experiencing grief over the loss because they had relationships to the deceased. However, in the participant groups the deceased person was closest to the bereaved employee [this was confirmed during the interviews]. For example, the husband of a bereaved employee might also have been grieving over the loss of his mother-in-law, however the closer relationship was the mother-daughter relationship, which positioned him as the cohabitant interview. The average age of

cohabitants was about 44 years old. This group consisted of 5 females and 7 males. A variety of personal relationships to the bereaved employee were included. This resulted in 7 married partners, 2 children, 2 friends/roommates, and 1 sibling interviewed as the cohabitant. Although it was not originally considered as a requirement, shared residential status became important. After two interview groups were completed, the requirement that the home relationship must also have a shared residence to the bereaved was a requirement to participation. This decision was made because much of the support and interactions with bereaved individuals came at home or were related to home life. A total of 10 participants shared the same household permanently and 2 participants, both children of the bereaved, lived with the parent temporarily (3 and 6 months) after the death.

Coworker Relationships

A total of 12 coworkers of bereaved employees were interviewed for this research. Please refer to Table 2.c. for a demographic breakdown. The average age of coworker participants was about 51 years old. There was a total of 7 females and 5 males. This resulted in 8 white, 3 Latina/o, and 1 black coworker participants. Understanding organizational status and hierarchy was important and therefore each coworker was identified as either a manager (superior), lateral (equal), or subordinate (inferior) in relation to the bereaved employee. There was a total of 7 lateral, 4 managerial, and 1 subordinate coworker relationships.

Table 2.a

Bereaved Employees

	Name	Age	Gender	Race	RTB*	DA*	COD*	Death	TSD*	Job	Status	PL*
1a.	Stacy	33	Female	White	Father	81	U*	Sud.	9 mo.	Marketing	Man.	5 days
2a.	Janelle	51	Female	White	Mother	88	Cancer	Exp.	12 mo.	Financial Planner	Man.	5 days
3a.	Alice	70	Female	Latina	Mother	95	Old Age	Exp.	10 mo.	Elementary Teacher	Sub.	3 days
4a.	Lynne	59	Female	White	Father	90	Old Age	Exp.	3 mo.	Dietician	Man.	3 days
5a.	John	42	Male	Latino	Father	68	Heart	Sud.	8 mo.	Call Center Rep.	Sub.	1 day
6a.	Anthony	31	Male	White	Grand-mother	82	Cancer	Exp.	4 mo.	College Instructor	Sub.	U*
7a.	Steven	63	Male	White	Mother	95	Old Age	Exp.	12 mo.	Sales	Man.	3 days
8a.	Joe	36	Male	Latino	Brother	29	Accident	Sud.	9 mo.	Sales Distributor	Man.	3 days
9a.	Christie	61	Female	White	Mother	81	Cancer	Exp.	13 mo.	Elementary Teacher	Sub.	3 days
10a.	Julie	69	Female	White	Partner	70	Stroke	Sud.	18 mo.	Nurse	Man.	3 days
11a.	Melanie	37	Female	Black	Brother	32	Accident	Sud.	17 mo.	School Psychologist	Man.	3 days
12a.	Adam	34	Male	Latino	Mother	53	Accident	Sud.	5 mo.	College Instructor	Sub.	U*

RTB* – Relationship to Bereaved, DA* – Deceased Age, COD* – Cause of Death, TSD* – Time Since Death,
PL* – Paid Leave, U* – Unclear
Sud. – Sudden, Exp. – Expected, mo. – month, Man. – Manager, Sub. – Subordinate

Table 2.b

Cohabitant Relationships

	Name	Age	Gender	Race	Relationship to Bereaved	Residential Status
1b.	Sean	42	Male	White	Husband	Same Residence
2b.	Bob	58	Male	White	Husband	Same Residence
3b.	Molly	31	Female	Latina	Daughter	Same Residence/Temporary
4b.	Glenn	60	Male	White	Husband	Same Residence
5b.	Marissa	37	Female	Latina	Sister	Same Residence
6b.	McKenzie	32	Female	White	Best Friend/Roommate	Same Residence
7b.	Lori	64	Female	White	Wife	Same Residence
8b.	Claudia	35	Female	Latina	Wife	Same Residence
9b.	Alex	60	Male	White	Husband	Same Residence
10b.	Bill	34	Male	White	Son	Same Residence/Temporary
11b.	Curt	45	Male	White	Husband	Same Residence
12b.	Mike	34	Male	White	Friend/Roommate	Same Residence

Table 2.c

Coworker Relationships

	Name	Age	Gender	Race	Job	Relationship to Bereaved
1c.	Mary	60	Female	White	Marketing	Lateral/Different Department
2c.	Larry	55	Male	Latino	Financial Planner	Lateral
3c.	Kathy	61	Female	White	Elementary Teacher	Lateral
4c.	Mark	52	Male	White	Dietician	Lateral
5c.	Crystal	47	Female	Black	Sales Manager	Manager
6c.	Aaron	30	Male	Latino	College Instructor	Lateral
7c.	James	46	Male	White	Regional Manager	Manager
8c.	Mitch	61	Male	White	Key Accounts Manager	Manager/Different Department
9c.	Monica	69	Female	Latina	Elementary Teacher	Lateral
10c.	Lauren	51	Female	White	Nurse	Subordinate
11c.	Jill	36	Female	White	School Psychologist	Lateral
12c.	Caitlyn	58	Female	White	Professor	Manager

Interviews

Each participant was given the IRB approved Informed Consent document (Appendix B, Appendix C, Appendix D) prior to the interview. Each group had a slightly different informed consent document based on the relationship type and expected duration of the interview. Before the interview took place, I went over the Informed Consent document with each interviewee to ensure that they agreed to continue with the interview. Each participant agreed to be recorded either in person or the verbal recording of a mediated interview. All interviewees were given the option to be interviewed at a place of their choosing. Although it was a goal to conduct all interviews in person, telephonic/mediated interviews were more easily accessible (6 in person, 30 telephonic). This enabled me to interview participants in different locations and cities across the United States. Mediated interviews also made it easier for participants to participate from their own home or location of their choosing. During each interview I recorded interview process notes (S. A. de la Garza, personal communication, July 9, 2020) in a notebook. For in person interviews I was able to note participant appearance, emotions, nonverbal expressions, etc. Mediated interviews did not give much nonverbal data on how the participant looked (except 4 interviews via FaceTime), but I still noted vocal variation and vocal emotion cues. Further, I used these interview process notes (S. A. de la Garza, personal communication, July 9, 2020) to write my own tentative interpretations as the interview was being conducted. These interview process notes (S. A. de la Garza, personal communication, July 9, 2020) also included written notations when quotes from a participant were particularly memorable or insightful and those notations aided future

data analysis. Given the complex nature of loss and the experience of loss in both home and work relationships, having three different groups enabled me to better understand "key features and processes of the scene–what the significant customs and rituals are and how they are done, which people exercise power" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pp. 176-177). Through interviews, participants were able to explain their everyday interactions with supportive and non–supportive coworkers and cohabitants. In order to best understand contextual information within the groups of three, I first conducted the bereaved employee interview, followed by the cohabitant, and then the coworker interview. This allowed better understanding of background when interviewing cohabitants and coworkers as well as enabling me to incorporate data referencing questions that were mentioned in the bereaved employee interview and connected to either the cohabitant or coworker interview.

Interview Guide Construction

Since there were three different groupings of participants, I had to create three different interview guides. In addition to the interview guides I created an introduction script that I read (sometimes paraphrased) to participants. Each interview guide had a slightly different introduction prompt based on if it was the bereaved individual, cohabitant, or coworker. The purpose of the prompt was to slowly move participants into the interview, but also to aid participants' focus on instances related to work-life. This was particularly important for the bereaved employee interview because participants had the tendency to talk about general bereavement challenges or emotions that may not be at all related to work or their work-life negotiation following loss. All participants were

provided the IRB approved Informed Consent document before the interview took place via email and again at the beginning of the interview. Participants who were interviewed in person were provided a physical Informed Consent document. Given that the majority of RQs related to the bereaved employees' perspective, I planned those interviews to be longer than the home or coworker interviews, which is reflected in the Interview Guides.

Separate interview guides were constructed for each group: bereaved individual, cohabitant, and coworker. Each interview guide focused on questions related to social support, resources transferred between work-life roles, and the challenges of managing work-life roles while experiencing grief. Each interview guide included a variety of generative (non-directive) questions (Tracy, 2012). A variety of different types of questions were utilized in each interview guide in order to best elicit descriptive responses. I used the following types of questions: experience, factual issues, tour, open ended, closed ended, and posing the ideal (See Tracy, 2012). Since these were semi-structured interviews I planned and effectively incorporate/added data referencing questions that focused on information gathered from interviews with the bereaved employee that were relevant in home and coworker interviews (Tracy, 2012). This enabled my ability to hear testimony from multiple sources, generating multiple perspectives on the same incident or topic.

The bereaved employee interview guide was the longest (Appendix E). It included 27 questions that ranged from short close-ended questions, to detailed open-ended questions that required included several probing questions. After the introductory prompt there were five main sections of questions. First, *Background and Work History* sought to

learn general information and develop rapport. Second, *Emotions and Experience with Grief at Work* probed into the ways bereaved employees experienced and expressed emotion at work. Third, *Returning to Work Following Death* asked questions about the initial return to work and ways that coworkers responded to them in the workplace. Fourth, *Relationships at Home* asked questions pertaining to social support from home relationships and how it helped or hindered their work-life stressors. Fifth, *Conclusion and Wrap-Up Questions* ended the interview and gathered demographic information. Between each main section I had a written prompt to transition to the next main section in order to clearly frame the type of information I wanted the bereaved employees to discuss.

The cohabitant interview guide included 20 questions (Appendix F). It also ranged from short closed-ended, to open-ended questions that had multiple preplanned probing questions. After the introductory prompt there were five main sections of questions. First, *Background and Relational History* gained general information and served to build rapport. Second, *Returning to Work* asked cohabitants to recall the early experiences they remembered bereaved employees having following the loss. Third, *Emotions and Experience with Grief at Work* asked cohabitants to recall how bereaved employees expressed their feelings about work/working. Fourth, *Relationships at Home* asked about the changes that have taken place at home following the loss. Fifth, *Conclusion and Wrap-Up* ended the cohabitant interview and gathered demographic data. Often during these interviews, I was able to include data referencing questions that I learned from bereaved employee interviews that took place prior. Between each main

section I included a prompt that transitioned to the next main section in order to clearly frame the type of information I wanted the cohabitant interviewee to discuss.

The coworker interview guide included 15 questions (Appendix G). This guide ranged from simple close-ended questions, to open-ended questions that incorporated probing questions. After the introductory prompt there were three main sections. First, *Background and Work History* gained general information and helped build rapport. Second, *Returning to Work Following Death* asked coworkers to recall the ways bereaved employees negotiated work once they returned after their loss. Third, *Conclusion and Wrap-Up* ended the coworker interview and gathered demographic data. These interviews generated opportunities for me to include data referencing questions learned from the interview with the bereaved employee that were relevant to the coworkers' experiential knowledge. Following each main section, I included a prompt that transitioned to the next main section in order to easily frame the type of information I wanted the coworker interviewee to discuss.

Data Transcription and Analysis

A total of 36 interviews were completed and included in this research (12 bereaved employees, 12 cohabitants, 12 coworkers). The bereaved employee interview lasted the longest, averaging ~57 minutes. This resulted in a total of 11 hours 24 minutes of recorded interview data from bereaved employees. The cohabitant interview lasted the second longest, averaging ~34 minutes. These interviews accounted for 6 hours 48 minutes of recorded interview data. As expected, the coworker interviews were the shortest, averaging ~28 minutes. All coworker interviews accounted for 5 hours 36

minutes of recorded data. The total amount of recorded interview data from all 36 interviews resulted in 23 hours 48 minutes. Each of these interview recordings were then saved on a thumb drive in addition to my computer. Each interview file was saved using the numeric/alphabetical ID (i.e. 1a., 5b., 10c.).

Transcription

After each interview was conducted those audio files were then transcribed. Each interview was transcribed within a month of the interview being conducted. I personally transcribed the first 12 interviews. After that I paid a transcription service to transcribe the last 24 interviews. Once all the audio files were completely transcribed, the original audio file was deleted from the thumb drive and my computer. All transcription documents were created using Microsoft Word. The format was single spaced in Times New Roman 12pt font. This resulted in 342 single spaced pages of interview text.

Coding

The data analysis process was comprised of five phases. First, I utilized NVivo qualitative data analysis software. NVivo software allowed me to efficiently organize, retrieve, and compare the data across interview groups and the entire sample. Each interview transcript Word document was uploaded into NVivo. Utilizing NVivo helped to later create a category codebook by providing easy access to coded exemplars from interviews. It also assisted in the merging of coded text to create larger categories that encompassed multiple codes.

Second, I employed procedural coding. Procedural coding methods are prescriptive (Saldaña, 2009). Procedural coding entails pre-established coding systems

and specific ways of analyzing qualitative data (Saldaña, 2009). Procedural coding allowed for a streamlined coding process that utilized pre-existing theoretical concepts. For the purpose of my research I chose to start coding data based on each research question. In NVivo I created nodes specific to each of the research questions. Therefore, data analysis began with a node for the following RQs ready for me to code data into:

RQ1: In what ways do bereaved individuals express emotion at work?

RQ2: How are bereaved individuals supported at work by coworkers?

a. What are effective behaviors used by coworkers?

b. What are ineffective behaviors used by coworkers?

c. How do coworkers negotiate their use of social support?

RQ3: In what ways do bereaved individuals' relationships at home provide support for work-life stress?

RQ4a: How do resources generated from work benefit bereaved individuals' roles at home?

RQ4b: How do limited resources generated at work hinder bereaved individuals' role at home?

RQ5a: How do resources generated at home benefit bereaved individuals' role at work?

RQ5b: How do responsibilities at home hinder bereaved individuals' role at work?

In order to procedurally code for each RQ, I went through each interview one by one. I starting coding each interview with RQ1 and concluded on RQ5b. Throughout this

process multiple quotes were coded into multiple RQ nodes. All data that was relevant to answering each RQ was coded into those RQ nodes. During the process of coding I also incorporated pre-coding (Layder, 1998). This consisted of me highlighting rich or significant participant quotes that struck me (Boyatzis, 1998). As Creswell (2013) suggests, these significant quotes were also coded into an NVivo node entitled "quotes" for the purpose of utilizing them to illustrate significant assertions and propositions made from the data. During this step I also looked back at my interview process notes (S. A. de la Garza, personal communication, July 9, 2020) on each interview where I had marked significant statements as I heard them live during the interview. The interview process notes (S. A. de la Garza, personal communication, July 9, 2020) aided my targeting of illustrative quotes.

After I went through coding each interview for the RQs, I then followed that process coding for emotion. Although there is limited research conducted on *emotions at work* (the experience of emotions at work unrelated to work), I knew that participants had expressed or witnessed coworkers expressing these emotions in the workplace. I also knew that emotional expression was present in the data about home life. Employing procedural coding enabled me to build on existing research on emotion at work by applying it in this context (Saldaña, 2009). I then coded all of the data in each RQ node for emotions such as: anger, happiness, sadness, resentment, aggression, frustration, ambivalence, joy, and gratitude. This helped to better clarify the ways in which emotional responses were triggered most specifically at work, but also at home, and how bereaved employees negotiated their emotional expression related to work-life stress.

Following the coding of emotional expression, I coded for *stifled grief* (Eyetsemitan, 1998). Research has indicated that employees often are unable to or limited in their ability to express grief emotions at work. Therefore, I knew from the research, but also recalled during the interviews that there were many instances of participants discussing stifled grief at work. Instead of coding each RQ node for stifled grief, I only coded the RQs that were theoretically concentrated on emotional expression at work. Subsequently, I coded all the data in RQ1, RQ2, RQ4b, and RQ5b for stifled grief. Upon completing this coding step, it was evident that stifled grief was linked to the performative expression of emotion control in order to act/appear professional. This resulted in the creation of the emergent category emotion control.

A significant portion of this research was aimed at understanding how social support functions within work-life experiences. Research has shown that specific forms of social support may aid individuals in varying ways (Brashers et al., 2004; Burleson, 1994; Dunkel-Schetter et al., 1987; Goldsmith & Albrecht, 2011; House, 1981; MacGeorge et al., 2005). Therefore, I next coded the data for emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, and appraisal support (House, 1981). Each form of social support was coded for in all RQ nodes except RQ1 because it did not focus on supportive behaviors at home or at work.

The final step in procedural coding attended to bereavement leave policies. My interview guide directly referenced bereavement leave policies and therefore I planned to have data that illuminated ways that bereavement leave policies may sustain, constrain, support, or challenge bereaved employees return to work. Research questions RQ4a and

RQ4b directly focused on work resources and therefore were the only two RQ data nodes that were coded for bereavement leave policy.

The third data analysis step employed focused coding. Focused coding allowed me to name the codes as specific categories and began extracting patterns included in the categories (Charmaz, 2014, Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). During this process some categories changed, merged, and were altered. Using procedural coding limited the amount of focused coding required, however during this step valuable coded categories emerged to account for data not relevant to those procedural codes already identified from theoretical literature. During this step, general emotion expression categories that had been coded, such as happiness, anger, sadness, gratitude, etc., were merged based on whether they were positive or negative emotions. Additionally, emergent codes describing bereaved employee emotional expression choice were altered. Bereaved employees noted the problematic nature of expressing grief emotions at work, while making a choice to express their emotions that resulted in the least amount of problems/most professional at work. Emotional expression codes were then categorized into the large node of intentional context for emotional expression with coded data related to private and confidential expression. The work-life dichotomy experienced by bereaved employees resulted in the formation of the out of body experience coded category. This category merged part of the data from the procedural code stifled grief with emergent coded data related uneasiness with being at work. In addition, data related to professionalism and emotion control was altered, which created the category of grief management. Data that had been coded as ineffective support from coworkers was more specifically broken

down. Emergent codes that described the failures of coworker support of bereaved employees resulted in unique codes for lack of empathy, business only, and assumed ineptitude. Finally, focused coding enabled further clarification of procedurally coded data for organizational bereavement support policy. During this stage, formal and informal bereavement leave policies and procedures were clarified as the following codes: accessible work-leave policy, non-official work assistance, limited leave policy, and limited leave knowledge.

Fourth, I created a category codebook using NVivo software. Although many more nodes were created in NVivo from coding, the codebook (Table 3.) includes the salient coded categories able to answer the research questions posed. Each categorical code within the codebook includes an abbreviation, the full name of the category, a definition/explanation, and provides hypothetical examples.

Table 3

Codebook

Procedural Codes			
Abbrev	**Code Name**	**Definition/Explanation**	**Examples (Hypothetical—not direct quotes)**
Pos.	Positive Emotions	Expression of positive emotions at work.	Gratitude for coworker support/aid, laughing with coworkers
Neg.	Negative Emotions	Expression of negative emotions at work.	Lashing out at vendor or coworker, snide/sarcastic comments to coworkers, gossiping
StifG.	Stifled Grief (Eyetsemitan, 1998)	Inability or limited ability to express grief emotions at work.	Hiding emotional displays, not being open with coworkers, lacking energy or positivity
EmoSup.	Emotional Support (House, 1981)	Person centered, emotion-focused/inductive messages.	Sitting and listening to bereaved, giving a hug, texting on Father's Day.
InstruSup.	Instrumental Support (House, 1981)	Tangible aid and service.	Covering work while on bereavement leave, covering classes, bringing bereaved coffee.
InfoSup.	Informational Support (House, 1981)	Advice, suggestions, and information.	Coworkers suggesting bereaved employee take time off or go home to get rest, giving estate sale information, relaying information about a math program.
AppSup.	Appraisal Support (House, 1981)	Information useful for self-evaluation and/or esteem building.	Affirming they are a good employee, child, sibling; suggesting they go home to take care of themselves.
Emergent Codes			
OutBod.	Out of Body Experience	Feeling out of place or uncomfortable at work because of loss.	Sitting and starting at computer, not feeling like they belong at work, being 'out of it'
GMan.	Grief Management	Performative behaviors to 'act' professional at and for work.	Performing a professional role, clothes and makeup to appear professional, putting on a front to clients.

Priv.	Private Expression	Private/isolated expression of emotion at work.	Leaving office to go to car to cry, looking at pictures alone, crying in car driving to or from work
Confid.	Confidential Expression	Expression of emotion to coworker viewed as a confidant.	Talking to coworker in office, emotional expression with coworker at lunch off work premises, venting
LackEmp.	Lack of Empathy	Self-centered messages void of compassionate communication.	Not acknowledging the death at all, coworkers venting about their own problems, coworkers unsolicited bereavement narratives.
BusOnly.	Business Only	Ignoring personal circumstances in favor of work-related concerns.	Ignoring the loss and asking if time was taken off, publicly admonishing bereaved, telling bereaved to 'suck it up.'
AssInep.	Assumed Ineptitude	Implicit messages indicating inability or failure at work effectiveness.	Pushing back deadlines unrequested, excusing bereaved from meetings because they were 'sad,' assuming 'personal problems' were too much to accomplish work tasks.
Acknow.	Acknowledgement	Tangible artifacts and simple or extended interactions related to bereavement.	Verbally communicating condolences, hand delivering a card, asking questions.
OpenDoor.	Open Door Policy	Availability of coworker to discuss breadth and depth of bereaved individual's choosing.	Asking if bereaved 'wanted to talk,' being available to talk outside of work, checking in on important bereavement milestones.
AccessPol.	Accessible Work-Leave Policy	Macro organizational bereavement leave, sick days, and personal days policies.	Suggesting to take bereavement leave days, clear communicated information about leave policies.
NonOff.	Non-Official Work Assistance	Micro organizational messages communicated by coworkers to ease transition back to work.	Giving employees leeway, having other coworkers take over work responsibilities, enabling remote working situations.

LimPol.	Limited Leave Policy	Organizational policies and procedures that provided less than adequate bereavement support/leave.	Limited bereavement or leave days available, turning bereavement days into vacation days,
LimKnow.	Limited Leave Knowledge	Organizational confusion over bereavement leave policy and access.	Not knowing how many bereavement leave days and feeling pressured take less or unsure if they should take all their bereavement leave days.
FunctRes.	Functional Resources	Relational resources contributing to completion of work.	Bringing clothes, making lunches, grading papers for bereaved employee.
KnowRes.	Knowledge Resources	Informative resources that aided bereaved individuals work effectiveness.	Providing info for profitable sales endeavor, giving advice about work related issues, tasks, or ideas.
PhysDem.	Physical Demands	Home responsibilities and relationships that physically take time away from work.	Using work time to plan the funeral, talk to family, manage the estate.
EmoDem.	Emotional Demands	Home responsibilities and relationships invoking emotional distractions from work.	Upsetting or sad phone calls or texts from family members or loved ones during work hours.

Fifth, I incorporated the use of theoretical memos into my data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). These memos helped explain generated categories in relation to previous theoretical work on social support, work-family enrichment, and emotions at work. As data analysis and writing of the results chapter progressed, I added to theoretical memos by including thoughts, assumptions, connections between categories and codes, as well as exemplars from the data. Throughout memo writing, I engaged in "constant comparative methods" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). By analyzing the coded data, I gained insights into the duality bereaved employees were describing related to working while experiencing grief. By returning to the coded data and adding to my theoretical memos I further clarified the ways that the coded data reflected an experienced duality for bereaved employees. This enabled me to further clarify the competing desires experienced by bereaved employees at work and their process of negotiating their integrated work-life following loss. Further, I was able to provide a stronger theoretical understanding of work-life integration by comparing bereaved employees' responses to those of their supporters, and then across the entire sample (Charmaz, 2014). Specifically, theoretical memos aided in the writing of the conclusions and theoretical implications sections of this dissertation.

Member Checking

During data analysis I also engaged in member checking. Member checking aids in the creation of trustworthy qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Stake, 1995). Through member checking qualitative researchers are able to add credibility to their study by confirming the accuracy of their interpretations of

participant voices by allowing participants to confirm or deny their interpretations of data (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Stake, 1995). At the end of each interview I asked if I could contact participants in the future if I had further questions or to clarify any data or interpretations I made. I emailed six participants to check that my interpretation and understanding was reflective of what the participants meant to state or claim. It was not feasible to contact all 36 participants, therefore I chose to select two participants from each group. I emailed them sections of analysis of quotes from an interview conducted with them. Member checking helped affirm my propositions and assisted the accuracy of my data analysis. Further I utilized "peer debriefing" (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spall, 1998). I invited colleagues not connected with my research to assess my claims and discuss them with me in order to help confirm my findings. All of these steps aided the thematic presentation of the results of this research study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS: BEREAVED EMPLOYEE WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

The goal of this research was to better understand the ways in which bereaved employees navigate the complex emotional, organizational, and relational work–life experiences following the loss of a loved one. It further sought to better understand the nuanced challenges and communicative choices made by loved ones at home and coworkers at work when providing support to the bereaved. The multifaced bereavement experience is one that impacts all aspects of life and is not one that follows a simple straightforward path that all walk the same. Therefore, rich qualitative data enabled a deeper awareness of these experiences by looking through the eyes of the bereaved employee, someone they cohabitate with, and a coworker of their choosing. Through semi-structured interviews, this study yielded many answers to theoretically grounded research questions. Ultimately, 36 interviews (12 with bereaved employees, 12 with a cohabitant of the bereaved employee, and 12 with a coworker of the bereaved employee) were completed in order to answer the research questions posited. Through a rigorous data analysis process that utilized procedural coding, identified emergent codes, built a category codebook, constructed theoretical memos, and sought out member checking from participants, I was able to categorize communicative patterns among these participants that paint a more vibrant understanding of the negotiated work–life bereavement experience. The following results section is presented thematically by providing interview exemplars answering each of the posited research questions. By illuminating the recalled lived experiences of bereaved employees, as well as a person

from home and work, this data reveals organizational, relational, and work–life communicative processes following the loss of a loved one.

Bereaved Employees' Expression of Emotion at Work

Organizational life is rich with varying displays of emotional expression. However, research has often indicated little about the nature of those expressions for bereaved employees. The emotional expression of grief and the communicative responses regarding its expression may be confounding to many bereaved individuals as well as members of their organizational workplace. Therefore, RQ1 posited the following: *In what ways do bereaved individuals express emotion at work?* Through data analysis, a number of thematic patterns revealed many ways in which grief is expressed, identified common emotions expressed at work following loss, and the performative tools bereaved employees practice in order to suppress or hide naturally occurring grief laden feelings that arise during work. The following themes were revealed through data analysis that answer RQ1: *out of body experience, grief management, intentional context for expression,* and *grief emotions at work.* In order to best frame the experience of bereaved individuals following their return to work, it is first necessary to explicate the conflicted nature of being physically present at work, while simultaneously being absent.

"I just felt like I wasn't in my own body." Out of Body Experience

Research has indicated that following their return to work, bereaved employees may struggle managing many aspects of the job (Bauer & Murray, 2018; Wilson et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2020). A significant number of employees' physical and mental health, as well as performance, may be affected by "normal" grief experiences and

reactions (Eyetsemitan, 1998; Gibson, Gallagher, Jenkins, 2010). A prominent challenge to work following loss is being present at work and performing. Managing conflicting emotions regarding working through loss can result in an *out of body experience.* This is described as feeling out of place at work due to thoughts related to the loss and being uncomfortable with organizational work. Bereaved employees struggled being present at work while managing organizational tasks due to thoughts lingering elsewhere on their loss and all it entailed.

A common experience articulated by bereaved employees was a distinct change in the way they felt about themselves at work. During an interview with Steven, a key accounts manager for a large corporate food service provider, he noted that upon returning to work after his mom died, “I was a mess, I felt terrible, I was just sitting in my chair. I had opened my email but I wasn't processing anything that was happening. I just felt like I wasn't in my own body.” (7a.) Steven directly associated feeling ‘terrible’ and “a mess” to not being in his own body. Steven viewed his current body as something that was not ‘normal’ to him and it made it hard to for him to “process” anything happening at work. Steven’s out of body example connects to research noting that bereaved employees feel tired, distracted, and moody, which can negatively impact their performance (Pawlecki, 2010). Stacy explained this out of body experience as feeling “not present” (1a). Although bereaved employees were physically at work, they did not recognize who they were while there and did not feel truly present in their organizational environment or their organizational role.

A phrase that participants used numerous times in interviews was “out of it.” Alice, a kindergarten teacher, recalled, “Everything felt hazy. It still does. My mind just doesn’t feel the same. At work I was just out of it” (3a.). This example sheds light on the fact that it wasn’t just her physical presence at work that felt off, but also, her “mind” was “hazy.” Bereaved employees not only physically felt out of place, but also mentally. Further, Alice points to the fact that this is not a temporal experience, I conducted this interview 10 months after her mother had passed away. She indicated that being “out of it was not something that is only experienced during the initial return to work, but can be experienced much longer.

A potential byproduct of feeling “hazy” or “out of it” is what participants described as working, but being on autopilot. In an interview with John, a salesperson in a call center, he explained, “One time I was talking to someone [on the phone] for twenty or thirty minutes. They asked me about the price of something and I literally had no memory of anything they were calling about” (5a.). Here it is clear that bereaved employees can both simultaneously do their job, but be mentally somewhere else. In this instance, the physical body is able to go through the verbal “motions” of explaining sales prices, while not actually being present in the phone conversation. A more drastic example of autopilot going array was when college instructor Adam explained, “I thought I switched to my personal ‘Gmail,’ but I was still logged into my work email. I wrote a whole email to her [coworker] telling her what I was bringing home for dinner” (12a.). This example indicated that being “out of it” on autopilot might lead employees to do the wrong tasks or in this instance accidently communicate something about their personal

life to a coworker. The simultaneous challenge of processing work while accidently writing an email to a coworker about dinner revealed the complicated ways that work and life spill over onto each other, and challenges any notion that while at work employees are not concurrently managing thoughts about their personal life.

Although a bereaved employee might mentally feel "hazy," their physical bodies are often experiencing symptoms of grief. Upon returning to work Julie, a registered nurse, recalled, "I looked pretty tired, I'm sure. I seemed pretty out of it" (10a.). In this instance, not only did the participant feel out of their body, but they looked "out of it." In this example her body was visibly leaking her internal state. Although many of these instances of feeling "out of it" are manifested internally, and not necessarily visible to coworkers, other times bereaved employees' bodies revealed their emotional state. Janelle, recalled such an experience by explaining that "She [coworker] actually noticed on a conference call with somebody else, I was kind of out of it, and so then I told her why I was out of it" (2a.). This quote illuminated the need to explain, if caught by other coworkers, why a bereaved employee might be "out of it." Whether or not the coworker demanded that a reason be provided from what that coworker witnessed, the bereaved employee still felt required or a responsibility to provide an explanation of why she was acting that way in the meeting. Janelle's example sheds light on how bereaved employees feel that they may be expected to provide an account for their behavior that acknowledges their grief or bereavement experience when appearing to have an out of body experience.

The embodied experience of loss can be something that leaks through our physical exterior but also something that others can cast upon the bereaved employee body. In an interview with Stacy, a marketing director, she noted:

> I felt very labeled. I wasn't myself. I wasn't the person who they've known for two years, I was somebody going through a loss. It was like they expected me to be thinking about it all the time and acting like it. Even seeing them in the bathroom they'd be like, "Oh, how are you". It was suddenly they had a very strong reaction to me, where normally it would have been a polite hello in the hallway. Coffee conversation or whatever, it was always about that [her father's death]. (1a.)

Stacy's exemplar demonstrates the ways in which bereavement and grief cast employees in roles that they may or may not want to play. In this instance Stacy felt as though her coworkers thought of her as a different person. She felt they no longer saw her the same way whether or not she agreed with that assessment. Further, she then felt the pressure to perform that embodied bereaved identity in conversations that normally would be void of such emotional types of expression and only have focused on her role as a worker.

Bereaved employees often noted feeling uncomfortable with this out of body experience; however, they also acknowledged negative reflections to being physically present at work. During an interview with Christie, an elementary school teacher, about her first week back to school she exclaimed, "I didn't feel like I was there. I definitely didn't want to be there. I didn't want to see those people. I didn't want to hear about their life. I didn't care about anything there. It wasn't important" (9a.). Christie explicated the how not feeling present can also make bereaved employees resent the mere presence of the organizational environment or around other coworkers. More than just being out of her body at work, Christie illuminated the need to free her physical body of her

organizational confines and her emotional investment in the lives of her coworkers. Emotionally investing in another person may be challenging for individuals experiencing grief and their personal expression of grief can make that experience more confounding.

"I could look like 'Steven the manager.'" Grief Management

As human beings we are expected to manage our emotions in many realms of life. The workplace happens to be one that is particularly salient for emotion management. Stifled grief is a common occurrence for bereaved employees at work after the loss of a loved one. Stifled grief is the inability to express grief emotions at work, or express them in a limited capacity (Eyetsemitan, 1998). The professional work environment makes the expression of grief related feelings, emotions, and experiences challenging and often suppresses their expression (Hazen, 2003, 2008). Therefore, bereaved employees utilize *grief management* to control emotions, emotional expression, and thoughts experienced at work associated to the loss of a loved one in order to appear professional. *Grief management* is communicated when bereaved employees apply professional clothing and makeup, have limited space to process the grief, and when they mask personal challenges or problems at work.

In the workplace our physical bodies are embedded with artifacts that display who we are and what kind of employee we want to represent. An obstacle that bereaved employees face is that their physical appearance is altered following the loss of a loved one due to exhaustion, among other psychosocial challenges. John, who worked in sales at a call center, explained, "They [the customers] don't know me and can't see me. I could act [sound] like I was fine. I could be professional and they didn't have to see my

face" (5a.). John's example highlighted the way that it may be easier to control one's voice rather than the whole physical body's appearance. However, for many bereaved employees their physical body is present not only for clients, but other employees. Christie asserted, "In some ways I think I am lucky I can wear makeup to work. At least that could hide my dark circles from lack of sleep" (9a.). For Christie makeup became part of her professional costume, hiding her "dark circles" due to lack of sleep post loss. Makeup is one part of the costume. Professional dress may also change following the loss of a loved one. Adam recalled, "I started dressing up more for work after that. Not sure if it helped me. But it masked some of what I was feeling." (12a.). Adam's "dressing up more" professionally was a choice that he made in order to "mask" grief that he was experiencing at work. It also made the personal physiological grief response less visible in the professional workplace. Similarly, Steven recalled, "When I was at work, I could dress the part. I could really force myself to not be 'Steven with the dead mom.' I could look like 'Steven the manager.' It kinda made me feel like it too" (7a.). Professional clothes became the costume to hide the bereaved body that may be tired or sad. Even though Steven knew he was "Steven with the dead mom," he at believed he could still perform "Steven the manager" and in that performance become that role. In these examples, work attire or costumes associated with professionalism served to cover up the ways bereaved employees' bodies might leak the "non-professional" personal embodiment of grief.

In addition to using costumes to perform the productive worker role, bereaved employees had to control their bereaved bodies in a workspace that constantly reminded

them that they were suffered a loss. Lack of personal and emotional space was exemplified by John, a call center sales representative, “Everyone is around you all the time. There’s no escape. You can’t cry or be sad. You have to act happy or happy-ish” (5a.). Working in the call center made it impossible to have privacy and therefore John had to perform “happy or happy-ish.” Whether or not people were bringing up the death to him, many eyes were on his physical body, facial expressions, and vocal tonality at all times. A marked challenge that bereaved employees experience upon returning to work after loss is the constant well-meaning barrage of sympathy. Lynne, a school nutritionist, stated that “She [boss] brought it [dad’s death] up at a team meeting. So, after everyone kept asking me how I was” (4a.). This example showed how the personal life of a bereaved employee can be interjected into a professional meeting without the bereaved employee’s consent. Whether or not Lynne wanted to address the loss with everyone at the meeting, she now had to because it was brought up by her boss. Even if well-meaning, the boss effectively limited her agency in negotiating how or if she wanted to discuss her loss with the audience of coworkers. It communicatively thrusted a narrative obligation to discuss Lynne’s grief within the scope of a professional/public workplace setting.

Bereaved employees are faced with many initial generic questions and condolence comments following the loss of a loved one. This requires them to manage their response within a professional setting. For example, Janelle noted, “It was more putting up the front, ‘Oh thank you. Yes, we were close.’ Being polite.” (2a.). Janelle’s response to these types of comments and questions indicated her need to “be polite” and respond

behind her mask/"front" while at work. Her "front" protected her from going deep while performing the polite employee. Coworkers not only ask questions, but engage in nonverbal forms of communication to show support to their bereaved coworkers. When asked about her return to work, Stacy remembered,

> Then people kept coming by and giving me hugs and saying they were sorry. I still felt like not able to just be myself or say what I wanted to say to anybody. I still, like I had to perform this very specific role [bereaved employee] and people kept asking what happened, how old he was... (1a.)

Stacy's return to work exemplified many bereaved employees' experiences interacting with coworkers for the first time after the loss of a loved one. Receiving hugs and being asked about the loss are roles that the bereaved employee is obligated to manage no matter if they want to or not. Coworkers ritualized condolence and sympathy ultimately thrust Stacy into a bereaved (private) role at work (public). This example shed light on how coworkers influence what bereaved employees do and say pertaining to their loss, while at work. It also revealed how work relationships can limit the communicative space bereaved employees have to escape their private loss in organizational settings.

The challenge of being present at work following loss meant that bereaved employees needed to control their internalized problems when interacting with coworkers. Anthony, a college instructor explained, "I wasn't as upbeat as I normally am. I tried hard to act like my normal self, but it was really hard" (6a.). Anthony's example showed how a bereaved employee might attempt to emotionally perform their workplace role similar to how they embodied that role prior to their loss. This performance can be hard for someone who is bereaved. More than acting "happy," Alice articulated that a

bereaved employee might feel “really bad and shitty, but I was focused on acting professional and trying to still maintain my commitments and keep a very polite attitude towards everyone” (3a.). Alice attested that her loss physically felt bad, but no matter how she felt she still wanted to “act professional,” “maintain commitments,” and be “polite” at work. Her need for professionalism at work superseded her internal emotional state of being. While examining her role in the workplace, Stacy expressed that she “never had a full-on sit in my office and cry session, because women just don't have that luxury” (1a.). Her example illuminated that her concern for being professional was necessary because expressing sadness was not something, she believed a woman had the “luxury” of communicating at work. Being a female marketing manager, she did not believe she could afford to allow such a display of grief emotion into the workplace. Stacy’s example reflects Bauer and Murray’s (2018) research that found gendered emotional displays control bereaved employee grief expression. Further, it elucidates the complicated way in which gender performance and professionalism are intertwined and indicated the coherent awareness bereaved employees have when it comes to their emotional expression at work.

Intentional Context for Emotional Expression

Most working Americans will have to return to work following the loss of a loved one and inhabit a space that is shared by numerous coworkers. While grief might be viewed as a private experience, it is very much part of the bereaved employee’s workday. Negotiating this expression and who emotions related to loss are expressed in front of is very salient in the bereaved employee’s mind while present at work. This research

indicated that the audience of this expression is considered and managed by the bereaved employee upon return to work. Bereaved employees were aware of the problematic professional issues associated to their expression of grief emotions at work. However, bereaved employees nonetheless made conscious choices to express their emotions in environments that attracted the least amount of problems within their organizational space and relationships. Although they might not have complete control over when all grief-laden emotions surface, they do attempt to control who, when, and where they express these emotions. The most notable themes that arose from this research indicated that bereaved employees purposefully chose *private expression* and *confidential expression*.

"It was an escape I needed." Private Expression.

Emotional expression at work is complicated without the additional burden of grief. Employees make choices about who and when they might express their emotions at work related to nonwork issues and life events. This research indicated that bereaved employees actively choose to express overwhelming feelings associated to grief and loss privately. *Private expression* is therefore the expression of grief-laden emotions alone or in an isolated location while at work. The overwhelming nature of these incidences required bereaved employees to purposefully self-isolate when those emotions were about to surface or when they knew they could no longer hide their grief around organizational members.

A prominent pattern found in this research was that bereaved employees had to escape the work environment to express overpowering feelings of grief. Stacy noted that

“I would start crying, or just kind of lose. I'd go for a walk or try to do something to try take myself out of the situation” (1a.). Going for a walk outside enabled her to take herself out of the physical space of her office in order to manage her emotional expression away from the workspace. This action prevented her embodied grief from interrupting her professional workspace. Similarly, Joe, a merchandising manager, explained, “I found myself going to my car to just get away. I wasn’t crying [in the car]. Just sitting… not really thinking. But it was an escape I needed (8a.). Joe’s experience indicated that leaving the organizational space to his car enabled him the emotional “escape” he needed. His car became the private safe-haven he needed to embody his private grief while still maintaining his commitment to his job.

The use of a car was a significant pattern in the narratives bereaved employees told about their expression of emotion while at work. This is further exemplified in an interview with Steven,

> I drive a lot to different locations to meet with clients. Before my mom died, I used to say prayers while driving. I’m not religious really but when she was sick, I used to pray in the car because my mom was very religious and somehow, I thought it was like she was doing it. After [her death] I used to think about her during those times. Not pray anymore but think and there I would cry. (7a.)

Steven’s story highlighted the way in which his private vehicle enabled him to connect to a time prior to the loss of his mother. Through this ritual he was able to emotionally connect to his life before her death as well as connect with her religious convictions in the isolated, safe space of a car. For Steven, the vehicle served as an environment to channel his mother’s memory and productively process his grief related emotions during his workday. Similarly, Janelle mentioned that “On my way to work. That’s about it. I

usually cry there. Or on my way home cause I pass the hospice she [mom] used to be at before she died" (2a.). Janelle's example also pointed to the historical connection driving in a car might have to life prior to loss. In this instance it was passing the hospice her mother was at before her death. Through driving she had an atmosphere to process these emotions freely alone and unencumbered by others' reactions.

Sadness was not the only emotion that bereaved employees chose to isolate inside their cars. Anger was also a salient emotion expressed privately in the confines of their car. Adam remembered that after his mother's death "For the first two weeks… I cried. Sometimes I yelled, in my car before walking into work. Never really thought about it till now. But it's like I was getting that out before going in" (12a.). Adam utilized the private space of the car to "get out" the angry emotions he felt before he went into the professional organizational environment. Later in the interview with Adam he recalled a moment when this private expression was interrupted:

> It's embarrassing. But one day I punched my steering wheel a few times cause I was so pissed off [about mother's death] and all the sudden Darren [coworker] appeared at my window. I was startled. He asked 'Everything okay?' I said 'yeah' or something but didn't explain anything and he just walked off. After that I never sat in my car outside work like that. (12a)

This example illuminated how private emotional expression when made public, particularly when it is a negative emotion such as anger, can be jarring and embarrassing for bereaved employees. Adam had a ritualized private space he sought before going to work to express his emotions, and when that space was invaded by the public, he felt forced to end his ritual.

Private expression of grief is directly associated to the concern bereaved employees have about coworkers' reactions. Anthony, a college instructor, articulated his complicated relationship to emotional expression while in front of the classroom when he recalled,

> In the middle of teaching I had to leave the classroom. I didn't tell my students much but said I needed a second. My student was giving a speech about their grandparent and I couldn't stop thinking about mine. I didn't full on cry, but I did check for a bit in the bathroom so it didn't look like I was crying or had teary eyes because I didn't want to be that teacher who cries at the drop of a dime. (6a.)

Anthony's concern for public expression of emotion while teaching was combated by his choice to physically remove himself from the classroom and out of the view of his students. His choice to go to the bathroom and "check" to make sure his eyes were not teary showed the active need to hide grief emotions in front of his class. Although they are not coworkers, in many ways, students are subordinates and crying "at the drop of a dime" may appear to students as weakness and thwart some of his communicative power in the classroom. A similar instance arose from an interview with Christie, an elementary school teacher, when she explained,

> My students are young [kindergarten] so they don't get much. But I remember they were making some art project… their family tree? Or home. Something like that and I remember starting to tear up. Luis [a student] asked 'You ok Mrs. Smith?' I said 'yes' but quickly went to the bathroom in my class. (9a.)

Christie's example showed that the age of a student does not change the desire for bereaved employees, bereaved educators in these instances, from removing themselves from public view when grief laden emotions physically manifest in the form of tears. Fear or concern over other organizational members' seeing sadness embodied in their

professional role pushed these employees to leave a public space, the classroom, to a safe isolated space, the bathroom. Their need to maintain privacy over their grief expression while performing their organizational role superseded all other possible options for grief expression while in front of the classroom.

"You can't just talk to everyone about what you are going to dress your mom in when she is dead." Confidential Expression.

When it comes to emotional expression at work an important mediator to that expression is the choice the bereaved employee makes over who gets to view their expression. The numerous descriptions of private emotional expression illuminated the desire bereaved employees had to hide or isolate their grief associated emotions at work. However, not all incidents of expression were private. Bereaved employees made choices about who to communicate their feelings and thoughts regarding their loss. *Confidential expression* is the expression of grief laden emotions with a coworker viewed as a confidant. This was often a coworker that bereaved employees had a close relationship with, however it could have also been a coworker who had experienced a similar type of loss.

Bereaved employees have some agency to choose who and when they express grief emotions. Stacy explained that this choice to self-disclose to a coworker about loss may be related to similarity of experience or knowledge. According to Stacy,

> A little bit when I was talking to Mary, especially after her loss and we both had loss. There was that time when she came into the office and told me about it. She was at work two days after and she was really unhappy about it. Her boss had been kind of shitty about it, so we sat down at the table and I got a box of tissues and we both talked, real talk about things and saying things that you can only say

> to someone else who's been through it or who's going through it. I was emotional with her. I wasn't bawling but I did openly cry, I guess. (1a.)

In this instance being able to identify with another bereaved coworker enabled both employees to disclose about their loss and also vent about their organizational frustrations related to bereavement. Stacy elucidated how shared experiences foster a shared identity as a bereaved employee and create an organizational space to disclose about loss to a confidant. Adam reiterated this notion when describing his communication with his boss, "Her [Caitlyn/boss} mom had died… it was like we had something to bond over. I could tell her about how I was feeling and she understood. It wasn't even weird when I might cry" (12a.). Both Adam and Caitlyn had experienced the death of a parent so it was something they could "bond over," which also enabled him to feel safe to cry in front of a coworker, let alone his boss. Janelle further clarified that when she was talking to Larry [coworker/confidant] who had lost a parent two years prior to her, "You can't just talk to everyone about what you are going to dress your mom in when she is dead or how I was pissed about the makeup they put on her for the viewing" (2a.). Janelle's story emphasized the intrinsic desire shared experience has to self-disclosure with employees while at work following loss. Shared experiential knowledge about death and the choices that need to be made after the death enabled a bereaved employee to disclose to a coworker/confidant while in an organizational setting.

Having a confidant at work was valuable for bereaved employees because it provided a relationship outside of the home that they could disclose their feelings and thoughts. Steven explained how lucky he was to have a manager like James, stating,

> I'm lucky. My boss was really cool. He gave me space and let me do my own thing and my own schedule. So, he would sometimes ask me about stuff; like the funeral, which he came to, or her house. I would talk to him about those things. Or how it was hard. I remember telling him how uncomfortable it was for me to be in her house after she died. It was someone else to talk to other than my wife. (7a.)

This exemplar indicated the way that being present for and interested in the bereaved employee's experience was valuable for Steven. James asked about the funeral and the process of cleaning out Steven's mom's houses and it communicated a concern for what Steven was going through. Further, this example showed how bereaved employees do seek someone else "to talk to" besides family. Confidants at work foster relationships in which bereaved employees can disclose information about their experience that they might not feel comfortable talking about with family members. When discussing the loss of his brother, Joe explained,

> My manager used to ask about my brother. He's a great guy. He doesn't have a brother, but he has two sons. So, I think he had some connection there cause he had two sons and I had one brother. He's a bit older than me too. It was nice to be able to talk about Johnny [brother] and it not be my mom or even family because they were a mess. (8a.)

This exemplar emphasizes that not only shared experience enables self-disclosure, but also a shared connection (e.g. the manager having two sons). Further it highlights that when a coworker makes an effort to identify with a bereaved employee, that effort is valued and leads to confidential expression. Finally, this example indicated that work relationships are sought out by the bereaved in order to talk about their loss with nonfamily members when their family members were "a mess." Work relationships are not directly attached to the loss and therefore, made it easier for bereaved employees to

discuss certain aspects of the loss that were more challenging to address with members of the family who might also been grieving.

Feeling comfortable to be vulnerable in front of coworkers was essential for bereaved employees' confidential expression. Adam, a college instructor, explained, "I didn't really tell anyone much. Just Aaron [coworker]. He was the only person I trusted to be vulnerable with. Especially about being sad or hating working when you just want to be home or anywhere from work" (6a). Adam's statement showed that vulnerability to expression emotion around coworkers was not only associated to the emotion itself, but also to the content of that expression. Adam did not want to tell just anyone that he "hated working" or be "anywhere away from work," but it had to be a coworker he trusted. These types of statements are antithetical to organizational aims and therefore not ones that can be stated aloud to anyone for fear of organizational retaliation. Not only did vulnerability matter in terms of taboo work related statements, but also personal ones. In an interview with Alice, she exclaimed,

> My daughter had all these demands. She wanted me to clean out the house, take care of all these things. I just was not into doing anything that fast [after mother died]. I remember telling Kathy how my daughter was "such a bitch" [joking laughter]. And told her [the daughter] "When I die do whatever the fuck you want." We both laughed about it. Not sure all people [she worked with] would appreciate that [language about the daughter]. (3a.)

This exemplar illuminated how having a trustworthy coworker is important when you are going to joke about your daughter being "such a bitch" and your own death. If Alice did not have the level of comfortability and closeness with Kathy that she had, she would not have been able to vent about her frustrations with her daughter. Through this confidential

expression she was able to use that relationship to joke and alleviate some of those frustrations she was experiencing in her personal life related to the loss of her mother.

Many instances of confidential expression happened within the organizational building. However, bereaved employees also indicated that locations outside of work were also helpful to their comfortability with self-disclosure. Julie, a nurse, explained that "sometimes I'd talk to Lauren [coworker] about Hunter [deceased partner]. She took me to get drinks one time. Outside of work of course. I felt safer talking about that stuff not at work with prying ears" (10a.). Confidential expression in this instance revealed that the location of expression mattered. It had to be "outside of work," where there would not be "prying ears." By taking Julie to drinks she was able to lift Julie outside of the organizational space and let her discuss her life more freely even though it was still with an organizational subordinate. This example showed how coworkers can still embody the confidant role outside of the organizational building. In an interview with Melanie, a school psychologist, she expressed a similar sentiment,

> We used to go to happy hour and often we would both talk about our parents [who had passed]. It wasn't all crying. But laughing or talking about the stupid shit that happens after someone dies that no one tells you about. (11a.)

Melanie highlighted how communication outside of work over loss was not always sad, but could be happy. Although laughing about situations that happen after a loved one dies might be viewed as taboo, for these two coworkers it was a bonding moment and one that could be facilitated outside the physical work environment (e.g. the hospital). In this instance, confidential expression was comfortable with a coworker who had a shared experience, but it was also important that expression take place in a different physical

space because the type of emotional expression during those instances could vary in terms of work-topic appropriateness.

Grief Emotions at Work

In order to more fully understand the ways in which bereaved employees express emotions at work it is necessary to explicate those specific emotions communicated. This research has shown that grief laden emotions are challenging and complicated when it comes to their expression at work, and while there are many instances when bereaved employees might be stifled, they also do exhibit negative and positive emotions with and towards coworkers. *Negative emotional expression* and *positive emotional expression* are communicated within interactions with coworkers that are directly related to the grief experience or are emotional responses of bereaved employees mediated by their grief.

"It was dick-ish of me. I didn't care." Negative Emotional Expression.

The experience of negative emotions associated to grief and loss are common for bereaved individuals. These negative emotions are not only felt at home but also can be expressed in the work environment as well. *Negative emotional expression* are those negative emotions communicated at work by bereaved employees that are influenced by their grief. Common negative emotions expressed are anger, frustration, impatience, resentment, and sarcasm.

Employees are often frustrated from an array of problems or people that they encounter at work; however, when also negotiating the loss of a loved one, this frustration can be communicatively heightened. When speaking of her frustration after her mom died, Janelle noted, "I might lash out at a vendor" (2a.). Although the vendor

might have been frustrating without the compounding factor of loss, grief accentuated the frustration and anger communicated by Janelle. A similar emotional response post-bereavement was recalled by Alice: “I would be more on edge with my students [kindergarteners]. I just wasn’t as nice or easy going. Especially right after I went back to work. My patience was nonexistent” (3a.). This example showed the clear awareness Alice had, at least after the fact, that her patience was nonexistent with her kindergarten students at that time. Alice found it difficult to be her normal “nice or easy going” self when interacting with her students. A more overt expression of anger over frustration was communicated by Steven to a customer. Steven recalled,

> A customer sent me five e-mails in one hour. So, I called her and asked if ‘there was a reason she didn’t think I could read the contents of the same e-mail sent five different ways.’ It was dick-ish of me. I didn’t care. My mom just died! (7a.)

Steven’s reaction to the five emails over the course of an hour might be common for many employees feeling frustrated by the customer. In this instance he even admitted it was “dick-ish” of him, but that he “didn’t care” because mom had just died. Steven did not feel guilty because he had the excuse that his mother had just died. His communicated anger toward the customer was therefore justified due to his grief experience.

Depending on the job, bereaved employees may or may not interact with various coworkers in any given day that have the potential to upset them. Going to work may already be a challenge for a bereaved employee, so working with someone who seem incompetent or a hinderance can amplify the negative emotional state they are already under due to their grief. Christie articulated this when describing her response to a fellow educator in a meeting,

> I didn't really care much [about work]. Linda, who is just annoying anyway, was talking about our math program. And I remember directly blurting out "ok thanks Linda. I think someone else would like to talk." Everyone looked a bit perplexed and she was awkward. I would have never said that before. (9a.)

Christie's sarcastic comment was met by a confused audience of coworkers because that type of message is generally not appropriate in an organizational meeting. Her predisposed frustration with Linda was exacerbated by the fact that she was also going through a loss and on edge. Ultimately her frustration was compounded by the loss and led her to express an unprofessional comment publicly.

However, not all unprofessional comments made by bereaved employees at work are communicated in public settings such as a meeting. For instance, Joe described such an interaction with a subordinate merchandizer who his client had complained about. Joe recalled, "I think I was pretty bad on the phone [when reprimanding Sam]. I think I even threw in some F-bombs and I don't swear at work" (8a.). Although he may have had the right to reprimand his subordinate merchandizer, it was out of character for Joe to use swear words when communicating at work. His verbal expression of anger became accentuated and manifested in swearing that did not coincide with his normal managerial interactions with subordinates.

Bereaved employees also expressed negative emotions to coworkers who openly discussed positive moments in their life around the recently bereaved. Melanie explained,

> Stephanie [coworker] was talking about how she had such a 'great' trip to San Diego. She kept going on and on and finally I said, "I'm so happy for you" [sarcastic imitation]. She knew my brother died less than a week ago and wouldn't shut up about her 'amazing' trip. (11a.)

This sarcastic incident exemplified how appreciating the positive aspects in other peoples' lives is challenging for bereaved employees. Melanie was just recently bereaved by the sudden loss of her younger brother and the idea of being happy for someone else was communicatively impossible. Furthermore, Melanie's anger over the fact that Stephanie did not take account of the fact that Melanie was grieving resulted in her verbal sarcasm. Having empathy for others' happiness is challenging when one is going through loss. Stacy illustrated this challenge by recalling the following interaction with a coworker:

> Judy was raving about her grandma's ninetieth birthday party. I think it was a few months after my dad died. I said something like 'isn't that wonderful' in a really shitty tone. Like my DAD just died and you're rambling about your ninety-year-old grandma. I could give two fucks lady. (1a.)

In this exemplar, Stacy faced the communicative dilemma of a coworker celebrating life while she was morning death. Moreover, she was further irritated by the coworker's lack of empathy for her grief experience that was in stark contrast to the story Judy was detailing. Stacy's sarcastic comment resulted in the inability to care about a positive aspect of someone else's life that was oppositional to her own grief.

"I bought everyone on our team lunch one day." Positive Emotional Expression.

Often times, loss fosters negative emotions and expression; however, it also makes bereaved individuals appreciate the care and concern others provide them while coping with their loss. This research indicated that appreciate emotions were in direct response to the effective support that bereaved employees receive from their coworkers following their loss. *Positive emotional expression* is emotion communicated at work by

bereaved employees in appreciation for their coworkers' actions and enjoyment experienced with their coworkers.

After the loss of a loved one there are many opportunities for organizations and coworkers to support their bereaved coworker. One of the most common is through condolence letters, cards, and flowers. Julie recalled, "It was really beautiful. None of them knew him [deceased partner], but there were so many flowers and cards. I just started crying" (10a.). Her appreciation was embodied through the manifestation of tears. Gratitude was very common among the positive emotions expressed among bereaved employees. The process of gratitude expression and acknowledgement has a significant prosocial impact on individuals' lives (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006; Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Janelle explained that "I had been out of the office for over a month. But all my work got done. I wrote hand letters to my whole team for covering for me" (2a.). Her gratitude was significant enough that she wrote all her coworkers letters to communicate how appreciative she was for their support and aid in doing her job while she was gone. This highlighted how gratitude produces a waterfall of beneficial social outcomes as it reflects, motivates, and reinforces moral social actions in the giver and recipient of support (Emmons, 2003; McCullough, Kirkpatrick, Emmons, Larson, 2001). Janelle's feeling of gratitude reflected moral action because it arose interactionally when she acknowledged that her coworkers had been helpful to her (McCullough et al., 2001). Gratitude was not only expressed in response to the organizational tasks coworkers accomplished or aided in accomplishing for bereaved employees, but also through their emotional support. Stacy stated, "I constantly thanked Mary for being my rock at work"

(1a.). Stacy explained that Mary had also experienced loss and came to be a sounding wall for Stacy to discuss her own loss. Stacy's gratitude was regularly expressed at work in order to show how valuable that relationship had become to her.

Gratitude on behalf of the bereaved employee was also communicated through the sharing of food. Sharing of food is a common bereavement ritual, and to show appreciation for coworkers, bereaved employees recalled many of these instances. Emmons and McCullough (2003) found a consequence of gratitude induction was prosocial motivation. Melanie, a school psychologist, felt particularly grateful for her team limiting the amount of cases she had post-bereavement. She reflected, "I bought everyone on our team lunch one day. It was only pizza. But I thought they should know I took notice [to their increased workload] and it was valued" (11a.). Through the purchase of food, Melanie wanted to show her coworkers that she valued their time and their energy to cover her workload while she was dealing with the loss of her brother. Similarly, Steven remembered treating his boss to lunch: "I wanted him to know that I appreciated how understanding he had been" (7a.). By feeding his boss, Steven aimed to show his boss that he cared how "understanding" he had been and that it was not unnoticed. This appreciation was significant enough that he purchased his boss lunch outside of work to show the value his role in bereavement support had meant. Grateful people develop superior social and cognitive resources and enact positive coping responses (Fredrickson, 2004), therefore Steven taking his boss to lunch led to a pro-social positive coping behavior.

Humor is a very effective tool to process many challenging life experiences and confusing emotions. Bereaved employees joked with their coworkers to poke fun at their current state of within the bereavement cycle. Christie explained that the priest at her mother's funeral made faces that looked like he was "sitting on the toilet." Recalling a moment describing that to her coworker, Christie joked, "Monica and I were laughing hysterically at my impression of the priest. I almost peed myself" (9a.). This instance emphasized the way that coworker relationships can help to alleviate some of the seriousness of the death and the funeral process. Joking about the priest made the experience less foreign and also created some normalcy over her mother's funeral. Christie was able to joke with Monica in ways she normally would have been able to prior to the loss of her mom, only in this instance, it was directly about something that happened (i.e., the funeral) because of the death. Loss also instigated moments for bereaved employees to vent about the bereavement process. Lynne recollected, "I would sometimes vent to Mark about my sisters and make fun of them. They are characters. We would laugh all the time about how weird they were" (4a.). Again, normalcy and humor are aligned. Joking about the "weirdness" of her sisters could be something done with Mark regardless of the loss. Humorous venting in this form enabled bereaved employees to reclaim part of their role at work prior to loss and channel it through experiences had after the loss. Further, this shared experience between bereaved employee and coworker created a space for support at work through positive emotional expression.

Coworker Social Support for Bereaved Employees

A significant portion of this research aimed to better uncover the ways that bereaved individuals are supported by their coworkers. The aforementioned data of this study has indicated that there are many emotional challenges faced during work by bereaved employees following the loss of a loved one. However, there are not many descriptions of how that support manifests in communicative behavior from coworker to the bereaved. RQ2 posited: *How are bereaved individuals supported at work by coworkers?* In order to more thoroughly answer this question, I specifically asked three sub-questions. First, RQ2a asked: *What are effective behaviors used by coworkers?* Through data analysis, the following forms of social support were revealed as effective ways coworkers aid bereaved employees: *emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support.* Second, RQ2b asked: *What are ineffective behaviors used by coworkers?* Data analysis indicated that ineffective patterns of support communicated by coworkers were the following: *lack of empathy, business only, and assumed ineptitude.* Third, RQ2c asked: *How do coworkers negotiate their use of social support?* Data analysis highlighted the subsequent coworker behaviors as means to effectively negotiate social support for bereaved employees: *acknowledgement, open door policy,* and *appraisal support.* Many coworkers may attempt to be supportive, but this research first wanted to understand which behaviors were actually communicatively supportive as articulated by bereaved employees.

Effective Coworker Support Behaviors

Personal lives filter into work just as work filters into our personal lives. It is impossible to completely separate the challenges faced during bereavement at home and not have any of that spill over into work–life. Moreover, it is likely unhealthy to attempt to do such. RQ2a asked: *What are effective behaviors used by coworkers?* This research has identified that bereaved employees *do* have challenges associated to their loss and that coworker relationships facilitate that supportive role. When planning to analyze this data, I knew that certain social support behaviors would be effective in aiding bereaved employees; however, I did not know what those types of support would look like given the minimal research on communicating social support at work. Data analysis revealed that the literature was indeed correct in that *emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support* were very prominent in the narratives bereaved employees told regarding effective coworker support. The following section further delineates how those behaviors are communicated through coworker/bereaved employee interactions.

"She asked if I wanted to go for a walk." Emotional Support.

One of the most important aspects of effective support is being there for the person in the way that they need. Empathic understanding is necessary to provide support to someone grieving over the loss of a loved one. *Emotional support* is person-centered, emotion-focused, and inductive communication (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; House, 1981). It relies on the supportive person to understand the context of a situation and then inductively know what to do or say to aid that bereaved employee. Although emotional support might appear to be relegated to close family or friend relationships, it was very

common among the narratives of bereaved employees. Employees often are friends at and outside of work, and therefore, it is not surprising that some of the most supportive individuals for a bereaved person's emotional well-being are coworkers.

A significant part of understanding what a coworker needs comes from knowing that person. In many ways the most emotionally supportive individuals were identified as those employees who shared similar experiences of loss. Janelle reflected that "the ones [employees] that are more like my age, it was a little bit more of a sharing of this time in our lives, and what they've been through and what I've been through" (2a.). Emotional support for Janelle was effective when both parties could share self-disclosive experiences with each other related to their loss. Sharing their similar experiences created a personal bond through a work relationship. Adam, recollecting on his boss who had suffered the loss of both of her parents, noted, "we could connect about that. But she never compared her experience to mine. They were different. But most people do" (12a). In Adam's quote it was clear that their similar experience fostered connection. Additionally, Adam's boss not choosing to compare the types of loss made their bond more salient and beneficial for Adam. Not comparing the different losses showed empathy rather than sympathy and was person focused. Communicatively, his boss was supportive by discussing her loss, but not laying her experience over his.

Understanding what the bereaved person needed was important to providing proper emotional support. Stacy articulated this sentiment when discussing a particularly supportive coworker,

> I got closer to Carol who was my former manager because she would ask the right kinds of questions about follow up. Like how everybody was coping and she was the person that had to be in charge of everything for her family too, so we really bonded over useless brothers. That's what we kept joking about. (1a.)

Stacy's exemplar highlighted the person-centered approach that Carol took when interacting with Stacy at work. Carol asked "the right kinds of questions" in addition to also sharing a similar experience about her own family following loss. This example showed how a coworker's emotionally supportive behavior can stem from similarity, but also blossom through inductive person-centered questions. Further, this example described a competent communicatively supportive action taken by an employee to emotionally support a bereaved employee coping with adverse life situations while managing their workday (Dyregrov, 2004).

Inductively knowing what a person needed was a common theme of support throughout interviews with bereaved employees. Adam asserted, "When he saw me and he just gave me a hug without asking. He knew" (6a.). Knowing what Adam needed, a hug, was a very powerful non-verbal message of support. It fostered a non-verbal connection between the two employees through the haptic action of hugging a grieving person. John recalled that his manager Crystal "used to leave me poems about fathers for like a month, on my desk, after he died. I actually looked forward to them" (5a.). Crystal inductively knew that these types of poems would be something that helped John. Crystal effectively made his desk a place of emotional support through poetry about fathers.

In addition to nonverbal hugs and leaving notes, coworkers also recognized signs that bereaved employees needed their support at different moments throughout the work

day. Julie explained that during a meeting, “I must have been zoning or something, I don’t really know. She [coworker] asked if I wanted to go for a walk. It was exactly what I needed…. We started to do that regularly after that” (10a.). Julie’s example revealed that Lauren (coworker) was observant enough in the meeting to see that Julie needed to be taken somewhere outside of the confines of the hospital. She did not have to ask but inductively knew it was necessary to go on a walk based on Julie’s body language. Lauren’s awareness and choice to act on that awareness manifested in communicatively supportive coworker action.

Emotional support may not only be communicated while physically present in the confines of the organizational building, but also communicated to bereaved employees by coworkers after work hours have ended. Lynne revealed that a text message can be extremely supportive. “It was Father’s Day and I got this text saying, something like ‘thinking of you.’ It meant a lot” (4a.). This example displayed the value placed on person-centered messages. Mark (coworker) knew that she had lost her father and likely was thinking about that loss on Father’s Day. By sending a text message he communicated that he was thinking about her and the grief she might be feeling on that Father’s Day. This example supports research that indicates emotional support positively impacts bereaved individuals’ well-being (Nolen–Hoeksema & Davis, 1999). In a similar instance Joe recounted, “I have no idea how he [manager] remembered, but he knew it was my brother’s birthday that day. It was the first one after his passing so it was on my mind. Who remembers that?” (8a.). Part of what made this example of emotional support effective was the fact that it boggled the mind of Joe that a manager could remember the

birthday of his deceased brother. This message revealed the deep care Mitch had for Joe, and the investment Mitch made toward understanding Joe's loss. Mitch knew that Joe's brother's birthday would be an emotionally complicated day and by reaching out he exemplified compassion and awareness for the grief experience. This example further highlighted the value of person-centered messages. Mitch acknowledged the brother's birthday, legitimized Joe's emotional needs, and contextualized them due to the importance to birthdays of the deceased (Burleson, 1994).

"People picked up some of the slack." Instrumental Support.

A significant source of support in any relationship can come from aiding another person in completing tasks. Bereaved employees often come back to work too soon following loss and their ability to function at work may be hindered (Wilson et al., 2019, 2020). *Instrumental support* was the service and tangible aid that coworkers provide bereaved employees following their return to work after the loss of a loved one (House, 1981). *Instrumental support* was communicated through coworker actions that enabled leeway when it comes to organizational tasks, assisted in completing work related tasks, and allowed for a more flexible work schedule.

Upon return to work bereaved employees may face a significant challenge accomplishing everyday tasks. A beneficial way that coworkers aided bereaved employees was to provide leniency during this transition back to work. Stacy explained that her coworkers "gave me a little bit of leeway. I looked pretty tired, I'm sure. I seemed pretty out of it. So, they gave me a little bit of kind of grace period" (1a.). Her coworkers were aware that she was "out of it" and that she would benefit from a "kind of grace

period." Allowing Stacy to have a grace period acknowledged the loss and showed that her coworkers did not want to add additional stress to her life during that time. Similarly, Janelle remarked that coworkers "would still continue to step in as needed and not bombard me too much right away with all the details" (2a.). Coworkers provided instrumental support by withholding some work-related details until she had time to better adjust to work after the loss of her mother. By withholding information, it eased her transition back to work by not bombarding her with all the potential work challenges that might have been present when she was concurrently managing the challenges of losing a loved one.

In addition to providing leniency on the job, coworkers also actively took over parts of the bereaved employee role and responsibilities. Alice, a kindergarten teacher recalled,

> Our classrooms have a door connecting them. After my mom died, I know that she [Kathy] came into my room a lot more to check on me or my class. She always made extra copies for me without asking. (3a.)

Kathy provided instrumental support by aiding in the production of copies that Alice would have had to make herself. The mere "checking" in on Alice's class helped Alice manage a group of six-year-olds. This example further epitomized support for the argument that physical proximity is essential for instrumental support (Dunkel-Schetter, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1987). Had the classrooms not been connected, Kathy would not have been easily able to "check on" Alice. Proximity of classroom aided the communication of instrumental support and eased Alice's transition back to work because she knew there was someone right next door that was there for her at all times.

More than just checking in on bereaved employees, Joe's boss "made it so people [coworkers] picked up some of the slack of me being gone" (8a.). This organizational act fostered an easier return to work for Joe because he did not have to be responsible for as many organizational tasks as his job normally would have required. The initial return to work following time off for bereavement leave marked a salient period for coworkers to step in and provide instrumental support. Julie, a nurse, noted that her coworker Lauren "stepped in on some cases during that time so I had a more manageable load" (11a.). Lauren eased the transition back into work by aiding the amount of work that Julie had to accomplish in a workday. The initial thrust of returning to work after a death can be overwhelming and when Lauren created a "more manageable load" for Julie's return, it supported Julie during a challenging work-life adjustment.

Outside of coworkers completing or aiding work-related tasks, organizational members also enabled bereaved employees task management through flexible schedules. Julie recalled that "For a week or so after I went back… I was able to pick my hours (10a.). Nurses do not always get to pick the exact hours they work, therefore this supportive act enabled her to manage her return more effectively. It enabled her to better plan her time for home related tasks and obligations by knowing when she would be working. In addition to the choice of schedule, bereaved employees were given flexibility of their work environment. Steven remarked that he "was able to work remotely from home much more than before which was really helpful when I had to handle all of the estate" (7a.). After his mother died, he was bombarded with the responsibility of managing her estate because he was an only child. His manager at work instrumentally

supported Steven by allowing him to work remotely, which granted him the ability to better address issues related to the mother's home. This action enabled the flexibility to manage work-life issues during work hours by working remotely.

"Just go home." Informational Support.

In addition to tangible on the job support, coworkers are able to provide insight that may also aid the experience of working through grief. *Informational support* is the advice, suggestions, and information that coworkers communicate to bereaved employees that assist work related choices (House, 1981). This research indicated that *informational support* was communicated when coworkers suggested that bereaved employees take better care of themselves, provided information about organizational leave policies, and gave suggestions regarding personal matters related to challenges faced by the loss outside of work.

Informational support was communicated to bereaved employees when coworkers made suggestions for bereaved employees to consider that would enable better self-care while at work. When a coworker noticed that Stacy was struggling, she suggested that Stacy "'Just go home,'" She's like, 'Look, in the State of California if you work even five minutes and then you go home, we have to pay you for that day. So just go home" (1a.). This simple suggestion acknowledged the strain that working at that time was having on Stacy. It further informed her of the legal organizational rights she would be granted to go home. This example supported research on informational support that suggests informational support benefits the management of health-related matters (Brashers, Neidig, & Goldsmith, 2004). After John's father died, he struggled sleeping. He

explained that one day a coworker "told me I needed to go home and sleep. I didn't want to cause I didn't want to use a sick day. I already used my one bereavement day. But she was right" (5a.). Even though John was apprehensive to take his coworker's advice, he acknowledged that for his own well-being going home was more beneficial than saving a sick day. John's coworker provided effective informational support by recognizing John's physical well-being and providing advice that alleviated guilt John felt about using a sick day.

Coworkers' knowledge of the organization options that bereaved employees had made them invaluable assets. Anthony, a college instructor, remembered facing a conundrum negotiating what to do with his classes in his absence:

> I was trying to figure out what days I needed to cancel class because I knew no one would be able to cover for me. He [coworker] suggested I use bereavement leave instead of sick days. I didn't even know we had that to use. (6a.)

This example highlighted how organizational members are unaware of their bereavement leave options. The informational support gained through this interaction expanded the options that Anthony had to manage the cancelling of class. Anthony's example exemplified the way in which coworkers can assist problem solving (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). With his coworker's advice, Anthony was able to take bereavement days and save his sick days for times when he might need them in the future. In addition to providing knowledge about organizational bereavement leave policy, coworkers suggested informal choices bereaved employees could consider to ease their work–life stress. Joe explicated that his boss "gave me the idea to have meetings over the phone with my merchandizers so I didn't have to be in the office as much. Which was really great because I was so busy

at home" (8a.). This bit of advice instructed Joe on available options he might make as a manager that could concurrently support the challenges he was facing at home after the loss of his brother. Due to Joe's managerial authority, Joe was granted permission to work remotely when he had not considered or needed it prior. Advice from management had the ability to provide informational support and grant Joe authorization to implement that information simultaneously. Adam recalled that his boss suggested he "make office hours online for a few weeks. I didn't know I could do that" (12a.). This suggestion provided him the knowledge that it was acceptable to have office hours online, but moreover allowed him to be present at home. In taking this advice, Adam's boss helped reduce work-related stress (MacGeorge, Samter, & Gillihan, 2005), by providing an alternative office hour option.

In addition to supplying knowledge about work related policy, coworkers were also able to give insight regarding challenges faced in bereaved employees' roles and responsibilities outside of work. Julie, a nurse, recounted,

> I didn't know what to do about the funeral or estate management or anything and he [bereaved partner] had no children. Sharon [social worker] gave me a bunch of ideas and knew so much from dealing with families in our hospital. (10a.)

Julie's account exemplified how a coworker can supply knowledge not only relevant to work related matters. From her organizational position as a social worker, Sharon was able to advise Julie about personal options she might make regarding her partner's funeral and estate. Their coworker relationship facilitated knowledge learned through work experience to aid a private matter waning on Julie. In this instance the work

environment provided the resources necessary to manage the unknown terrain Julie was currently facing at home.

Ineffective Coworker Support Behaviors

Understanding the nature of supportive behavior is further understood by delineating the ways in which people are unsupportive. RQ2b asked: *What are ineffective behaviors used by coworkers?* This research has explicated three effective socially supportive behavior patterns communicated by coworkers for bereaved individuals. It is not surprising that coworkers have the ability to be equally unsupportive to bereaved coworkers. Often support is well intended by members of a bereaved individual's social network; however, it is not always received as supportive. There are also instances in which members in a bereaved individual's social network make no attempt to provide support and therefore are purposefully non-supportive. Ineffective support were those behaviors that hindered a bereaved employee's ability to express their emotions or identity at work. Through data analysis three coworker behaviors were identified as non-supportive for bereaved employees: *lack of empathy*, *business only*, and *assumed ineptitude*. When viewed in contrast to the three socially supportive behaviors employed by coworkers, these communicative actions are quite oppositional. This section further delineates each thematic non-supportive behavior.

"She never said one thing to me about my mom." Lack of Empathy.

One of the most problematic ways that coworkers can handle communicative interactions with bereaved employees is through the perceived lacking of empathy. Part of the challenge of empathy is to aim to understand the perspective of the bereaved

individual from their point of view, rather than our own. Whereas *emotional support* aimed to be person-centered, *lack of empathy* is quite the opposite. This research defines *lack of empathy* as self-centered messages that minimally or are void of compassionate communication. This analysis found that a lack of empathy was communicated when coworkers did not acknowledge the loss, focused their attention on their own problems rather than the bereaved employee, and provided placated responses to loss.

One of the first things that a coworker can do is to acknowledge the loss another coworker has just experienced. However, this simple communicative act is not always expressed. Janelle succinctly stated, "the most unhelpful thing is to not acknowledge it at all" (2a.). When coworkers fail to acknowledge the loss, they fail to acknowledge part of that coworker's identity as a bereaved parent, child, sibling, etc. Sometimes this lack of acknowledgement might arise because of fear of upsetting the bereaved employee, but other times it may be as simple as a lack of compassion. Christie described the frustration she had with a fellow educator,

> I saw her [fellow teacher] every single day. She knew my mom was sick for over a year. She knew I was sleeping over her house taking care of her. She knew she died. And she never said one thing to me about my mom. (9a.).

This example highlighted the importance that Christie placed on coworkers to acknowledge her loss. Christie expected that her coworker would at least mention the death or say sorry, but instead she said nothing. No matter the coworker's reasons for failing to acknowledge the loss, this perceived lack of empathy resulted in anger in Christie because an expectation of compassion was not met. This may be even more

complicated when a superior at work fails to acknowledge a bereaved coworker's loss. Stacy explained,

> My boss was really acting like nothing happened. I got five bereavement days because the handbook says you get five bereavement days. He's like a policy person, so it wasn't up to him... But he never asked me about it, he didn't find a card for me even though the CEO brought me a card and walked in and was like, "I lost my father recently" had a really nice talk about it. I don't even really know that guy at all, but my boss ignored it. (1a.)

This exemplar also revealed an expectation that a bereaved employee had that other coworkers, in this instance Stacy's boss, acknowledge her loss. Her example also highlights how even though a bereaved employee might know a coworker better and expect more from them, that when those expectations are not met, they can be further agitated. Acknowledgment is a simple act of empathy that communicates awareness and common courtesy from coworker to the bereaved and failing to do so can hurt the relationship.

Lack of empathy was also present in coworker interactions with bereaved employees when coworkers focused on their own problems rather than communicating awareness of the loss their coworker had just experienced. Steven delineated such an incident:

> It was the first day I came back to work. Morris [coworker] asked "how I was doing?" Not because of my mom dying, but just a normal friendly 'how ya doing' work thing. I said I was fine and before I could say anything else, he went off about how horrible his day already was cause he got the wrong coffee at Starbucks… Oh yeah and on my desk was a condolence card from him and his wife. (7a.)

In this example, Steven described an unsupportive interaction in which a coworker failed to acknowledge the loss, but also complained about his own problems because he got the

"wrong coffee." Giannini (2011) found that friends and family members' acknowledgment of parents' loss of their child supported their recovery of their fractured identities. One of the most glaring unsupportive aspects of this interaction is the lack of awareness that a bereaved individual is going through a significantly more pressing emotional challenge than not getting the correct coffee at Starbucks. Moreover, Morris knew about the loss because he gave a condolence card, but either forgot or was too self-focused to care to provide support. This perceived self-centered communicative action is even further complicated when coworkers discuss problems that share similarities to bereaved employees. Alice recalled that her coworker "was bitching about her dad who had dementia and was in a nursing home. I was pissed so I just told her, 'well at least he is alive.' And walked off" (3a.). This example illustrated that lacking awareness of audience can create an unsupportive environment for a bereaved employee. Often employees vent to other employees about their life, but in this instance, Mary did not realize or consider that complaining about her father, who was alive, around Alice, whose mom had just died was self-centered. This interaction shed light on the way that perceived lack compassion can result in hostile or aggressive communication between the bereaved employee and coworker.

Finally, a perceived lack of empathy can be communicated when coworkers placate sympathetic responses to bereaved employees. In a conversation with a coworker about Anthony's grandmother's death the coworker emphasized the fact that "*at least* she was old" (6a.). Although there is some logic in the sentiment that a person dies old is better than young, however this instance reveals how expressing that fact is not at all

person-focused. Anthony did not want to hear about how death is somehow better because his grandmother was old because to him, she was still gone. It was likely that the coworker meant to shed light on the loss, however that message was not viewed as supported or warranted. These types of statements also interactionally silence the bereaved employee's ability to further discuss their grief over the loss because it was expected and therefore less tragic. This example supports research that suggests emotions connected to grief are suppressed (Eyetsemitan, 1998; Hazen 2003; Miller et al., 2007). Placating responses about death can be viewed by bereaved employees as trivializing something that to them is very important, no matter the age of the person.

Another way that coworkers placated bereaved employees was by narrating their own personal experience with loss. The week after Christie returned to work, she had a conversation with her vice principal in which, "He then went on to tell me about what it was like when his dad died. I get it. But I don't care" (9a.). Part of the challenge of being supportive is that often the only way individuals know how to support is to use their own experience to understand another person. Often sympathy is meant to be helpful, but its use, particularly when it is prescribed to loss, is stifling and viewed as unhelpful to the recently bereaved. Although Christie acknowledged that she understood the similarity, she also did not care to hear about his loss in that specific moment. Further, this type of communicative act hindered the ability of Christie, the bereaved employee, to delineate her own feelings and experiences with loss that may have been divergent from her coworker's.

"Suck it up." Business Only.

A marked challenge that bereaved employees faced when returning to work is that their work–life and those in it, might have little or no concern for what was happening in their personal life. Each organization and organizational culture is different and therefore may facilitate more or less integration of personal and professional in the workplace. However, the main purpose of work is to work. When bereaved employees returned to work and coworkers' focus on business matters superseded any acknowledgment of their loss, this resulted in very unsupportive communicative messages from coworkers. *Business only* are communicative interactions in which coworkers ignored bereaved employees' loss in favor of work-related concerns. These unsupportive actions happened when coworkers only accounted for the business of loss, managed employees to make sure they are doing their job, and reprimanded them for distractions related to grief.

When someone takes time off for bereavement there are certain procedures that organizations require. Although meeting these requirements might be the last concern for the recently bereaved, they are nonetheless part of their job. Bereaved employees experienced tension with these procedures when coworkers deferred to business' matters such as bereavement leave without acknowledging why that leave was taken. After her father died, Lynne emailed her manager and was "told to make sure I 'checked in' with Hillary in HR" (4a.). This message was clear, straight to the point, and practical, but perceived as inherently unsupportive because it did not even acknowledge why she needed to "check in" in the first place. Anthony elaborated,

> I had got an email from my boss earlier in the week but I missed it. I might have ignored it to be honest. But I replied. I said sorry for the delay and that my grandmother had died and then I responded to what was needed. I got an email immediately back. It did not say "sorry to hear that." Or "how are you doing?" Nothing. The only words in the email were, "did you report your time off for the funeral?" I have never been more pissed off at a boss in my life. (6a.)

Anthony's example further complicated the sentiment that Lynne described. Anthony was "pissed off" because his boss (a) did not acknowledge the loss, (b) did not ask how he was doing, and (c) was only concerned that any absence was accounted for by him. Anthony's boss' email emphasizes the rational control over engaging emotions in order to have an effective organizational life (Putnam & Mumby, 1993). During member checking, I reached out to Anthony after the interview to clarify if he was upset that the implication of the email was that his boss was concerned, he might have cancelled class without reporting it to the department. He confirmed my assumptions and described her as a "human devoid of emotions." His example and his follow-up description revealed a bereaved employee who felt his loss and its emotional toll was never accounted for by his boss' communicative behaviors.

Tenuous relationships with managers can create challenging work environments for bereaved employees. Absenteeism is common following loss, and in some instances, increased surveillance over employees is implemented. Anthony, a college instructor, expounded this type of organizational behavior,

> It is very unlikely that my boss would ever walk by my classroom when I was teaching, but it was the Tuesday after I came back from the funeral and I was teaching. Ten or fifteen minutes into class she walked by the room looking in. She could have been walking to meet someone, but I know she was looking in to check to make sure I was doing my job. (6a.)

This type of surveillance implied that Anthony needed to be “checked” on in order to make sure he was doing his job and not taking any advantage of his organization. From the interview, Anthony clarified that he did not cancel a single class or take any time off for his grandmother’s funeral because he was able to travel around his teaching schedule. His boss’ upmost concern centered on if he was doing his job and, in those actions, communicated the perception that she had no concern for his well-being other than he was a cog doing his work.

It was not uncommon for bereaved employees to struggle with work-related tasks following loss. In many instances, they had to manage important tasks related to the death (e.g. the funeral planning) that became problematic to their employee role and responsibilities. Stacy delineated this dilemma in a conversation she had with her boss in his office,

> At one point I went in and I told him I had to leave early one day to go to the funeral home and he acted kind of annoyed. I was really mad because there's been times where I had to work overtime or work extra not for any pay. I always do what needs to be done, I don't miss my deadlines. (1a.)

Stacy’s anger was situated around her boss’ failure to account for the hard worker she had been while in that organization, but rather feeling “annoyance” when she asked for time off to go to the funeral home. This example revealed unsupportive managerial behavior came from a focus on her temporal distraction and not her historical precedence of worker effectiveness. Organizational frustration with bereaved employees was also made publicly. John remembered, “I was clearly dazing off. It happened then [after father died] and she [a manager] said ‘can everyone pay attention.’ I know it was directed at me

cause she was looking right at me. It was embarrassing" (5a.). Although his name was not used, this type of elementary school, public reprimanding was "embarrassing." It failed to acknowledge the possible reasons he might have been dazing off and further made this action publicly known as an example of what will not be tolerated in that office. Instead of providing supportive leniency and ignoring John's perceived lack of attention, his manager, without using his named, called him out for his lack of work engagement.

Although reprimands often come from managers, this is not always the case. Julie, the lead nurse of her unit, recalled "[Linda] told me that I was gonna have to 'suck it up' in order to get through this shift. Yeah, I looked tired but that's no way to talk to someone" (10a.). First, Julie was Linda's manager so the organizational power was thwarted by this comment. Second, Linda failed to acknowledge that there might be a reason Julie "looked tired." Third, Linda's comment, although potentially well meant, suggested that Julie not listen to her body in order to be a productive organizational employee and "suck it up." Linda's communicative message perpetuated the dichotomy that work and home are separate and that they do not spill over into one another. Another employee may have responded to this statement differently, however the lack of person-centeredness created an interaction that was perceived by Julie as inherently unsupportive.

"I don't think you can manage." Assumed Ineptitude.

This research has indicated that coworkers demand that bereaved employees act professionally and perform their job well, sometimes without considering their current emotional state and outside work obligations. Another way that coworkers were

unsupportive was to assume bereaved employees' emotional states or outside obligations somehow automatically made them less effective at their job. *Assumed ineptitude* are the implicit or overt coworker messages that suggest bereaved employees are unable to complete tasks at work or are failing at work effectiveness due to their loss. These unsupportive messages were communicated by lowering workload expectations, stepping in to help the bereaved employee regardless if they asked for assistance, and blaming bereaved employees for a failure in productivity.

A challenging dilemma that occurred when bereaved employees came back to work was that while lowering their workload can be supportive, some employees do not want lowered expectations and think it has negative assumptions for their work identity. Joe, a merchandising manager recalled, "They had been giving me less work, but at a certain point I didn't like it. I didn't want to be the guy everyone had to help out. I was never that guy" (8a.). Likely his organization aimed to help him at work, but "helping" him out, it was counter to the worker identity he had created. His organizations' actions were perceived as unsupportive because they did not support the identity of "hard worker" Joe. Moreover, organizational members did not ask him if he wanted less work, they just assumed that is what he needed after the loss of his brother. Lowered organizational expectations are further explicated by Stacy,

> They also changed their level of expectations of me, which really frustrated me. They expected nothing of me. They were like, "Oh, you don't need to do that. You don't need to come to this meeting. We can just push that a few weeks" or whatever. I didn't get to be the one to say can we push this? It was they assumed they knew what I needed. That made it worse because in a way, if I had work that was on a deadline, I probably would have been able to get out of my own head a

> little more and just focus on what I needed to do. But they were like no, no, no we'll push this back, we'll move this. (1a.)

Stacy's frustrations as a bereaved employee came from her lack of agency over what she was able to choose she could or could not do at work. Stacy wanted to use work as a way to "get out of her own head" or distract herself from her grief over her father's death. Stacy wanted work to function as a source of stability and familiarity, but was denied that option from her coworkers (Charles-Edwards, 2009). Although the intention was to aid Stacy, failing to ask what she needed was in opposition to the productive and responsible organizational identity that she desperately wanted to cling to after her loss.

Well-meant organizational aid can create problematic assumptions surrounding bereaved employee performance. Adam, a college instructor and graduate student at the time his mother died, remembered, "I was working on this paper for a class with another grad student. She told me, 'I don't think you can manage doing the methods section alone. I will help.' I didn't say I needed it" (12a.). In this example, Adam's colleague assumed that he was incapable to "manage doing the methods section alone," and therefore inserted herself into his work in order to aid his productivity on their paper. Her assumption negated his agency to say whether or not he needed or wanted help. This assumption by Adam's colleague reflected a perception that due to his loss, Adam must have been lacking in job performance. Another example that problematized well-meant organizational action was recounted by Joe:

> I emailed my higher up boss, he's the regional manager, wondering what had happened with the [company name] account because I had not heard. He told me that it was solved and that he took me off of the emails because of my 'personal issues' [brother dying]. (8a.)

It is unclear whether or not his regional manager assumed his "personal issues" were viewed as a problem or if he just wanted to make work easier after Joe's loss. Either way, the regional manager's action removed choices over what Joe could or could not handle as a bereaved employee. From Joe's perspective, it problematized his "personal" life as something that at that time negatively affected his organizational productivity. Additionally, when Joe's regional manager associated loss with an issue for the organization, and therefore something that needed to be mitigated by removing Joe from the situation, the regional manager communicated that bereavement was in and of itself a personal problem that affected the organization negatively.

In addition to mitigating bereaved employee work obligations, organizational members also blamed bereaved employees for potential failures at work. John, a call center sales representative, explained,

> We were going over our weekly [sales] numbers and ours were down. I remember he [boss] said something about 'not naming names' for who was at fault. I remember Diana and Valarie [coworkers] roll their eyes at each other and look my way thinking I didn't see them. (5a.)

This example revealed how coworkers might blame a bereaved employee for lowered sales numbers. Whether or not John was producing less, he felt blamed by coworkers because of his bereaved status. Moreover, this example shed light on how bereavement can be faulted by other organizational members and perceived as inherently oppositional to organizational goals. Along the same lines, Lynne, a school nutritionist, remembered,

> Our menu for the week was incorrect and this had been a problem for the last month. My boss called me out [in a meeting] saying, "Lynne, I know you just lost your mom." I had lost my mom. "But we really need to not be making these

> mistakes." I wanted to say, "hey asshole, it was John's fault and my mom isn't dead." It was his fault, but of course it had to be the sad woman's. (4a.)

Lynne's experience delineated unsupportive modes of operation enacted by coworkers. Lynne's loss was irrationally cast as a source of departmental failure. More specifically, her boss incorrectly assumed that she was to blame for the mistake and that it was due to her inability to manage the challenges associated with loss. Additionally, her boss chose to convey this message publicly and therefore denigrated her organizational identity in front of other coworkers. This public blame could have resulted in coworkers jumping to similar negative assumptions about her ability to function effectively at work due to the fact that she had recently lost a loved one.

Negotiating Social Support at Work

A substantial goal of this research was better understanding how coworkers communicatively manage social support for bereaved employees. RQ2c asked: *How do coworkers negotiate their use of social support?* This research has described ways that bereaved employees view specific supportive and unsupportive actions from coworkers. The value of including coworkers in this analysis was that it better explored the nuanced communicative choices coworkers negotiated during the support process at work. Through data analysis emergent themes were revealed that explicated communicative choices coworkers made to negotiate support: *acknowledgement, open door policy,* and *appraisal support.* The following section further delineates these coworker actions.

"I wanted her to know I was interested." Acknowledgement.

Coworkers' perceived lack of empathy about and not acknowledging the loss was described by bereaved employees as incongruous with a supportive work environment. Therefore, the simple act of acknowledgement served as a first step to aid bereaved employees upon their return to work. *Acknowledgement* was communicated through artifacts and simple or extended interactions with bereaved employees about their grief or bereavement experience. This data revealed that acknowledgment was accomplished through tangible bereavement artifacts, nonverbal actions, and demonstrating interest in the bereaved employee's experience.

A common organizational response to bereavement is made through tangible bereavement artifacts such as condolence cards or flowers. Each one of the participants recalled coworkers leaving them cards or flowers after the loss of their loved one. Stacy noted, "Pretty quick I got flowers and a card from them saying they were really sorry for my loss" (1a.). Similarly, Janelle recalled that the closeness of her relationship to coworkers did not necessarily matter when it came to communicated bereavement artifacts. Janelle explained, "There were people who didn't know me that well who got me flowers, which was nice" (2a.). Even though Janelle did not know the coworkers well, it was still comforting to know that even acquaintance coworker relationships still acknowledged her loss. Mark, a nutritionist who worked with Lynne, remembered, "When I saw her, I joked with her about her not having allergies cause it was a nursery in her office. We have that kind of a relationship" (4c.). Mark's close relationship with Lynne enabled him to understand that humor was effective in negotiating how inundated she would be with flowers once she entered her office. It both acknowledged her loss and

the fact that it was not ordinary that she would have a plethora of flowers on her desk. Through Mark's use of humor, he communicated normalcy onto Lynne's non-normal situation and enacted relational norms established well before her father's passing.

Prior experiences with personal loss aided coworkers in their ability to negotiate acknowledgment with bereaved coworkers. Caitlyn, Adam's boss, explained, "I remember when my mother died and no one said anything to me. So, I made sure to let him know right when I saw him that I was sorry" (12c.). Caitlyn used her own experience with loss to influence the choice she made to acknowledge the death of Adam's mother immediately upon seeing him at work. Nonverbal actions were also used to facilitate acknowledgment from coworkers. James, Steven's boss confirmed that "The first thing I did was give him a hug and say that I was sorry for his loss" (7c.). Acknowledgment in this instance was communicated both verbally and nonverbally immediately upon seeing Steven back at work. Utilizing condolence cards as conversation initiators provided Monica the ability to provide open a dialogue with Christie about her mother's passing. Monica explained, "I made it a point to find her and hand deliver her a card. It's so easy to just leave it in their box and never say anything. We actually had a long talk about her mom" (9c.). Not only did Monica provide a condolence card, she went out of her way to show compassion by hand delivering the card to Christie. This compassionate communicative act fostered a space to have a conversation with Christie about her mom's passing. Through this interaction, Monica's supportive communicative action aided Christie's recovery through recognition (Giannini, 2011). Monica recognized the

importance of the loss and made every attempt to show her support and investment in their coworker relationship.

Along with bereavement artifacts and hugs, showing interest in the bereaved employee's loss initiated supportive dialogue. Jill, a fellow school psychologist with Melanie, remarked, "I am a question person. But not like pushy. I wanted her to know I was interested. So, I asked about her parents, funeral, stuff like that" (11c.). This example expounded that instead of prescribing or making assumptions about the loss, Jill chose to ask questions and let Melanie provide the answers. This communicative choice allowed Jill to acknowledge the loss and initiate conversation about that loss without being "pushy." Awareness of bereaved employees needs aided coworkers' supportive behaviors at work. Lauren, a subordinate nurse on Julie's team, recalled, "I could see that she was not herself so I just got a chance privately to ask her how she was feeling and if she wanted to go for a walk and talk" (10c.). This example highlighted Lauren's acknowledgment of Julie's struggle at work, as well as facilitating a space to ask how she was doing. Through acknowledgment she was able to provide emotional support and open a channel of dialogue about the loss.

"I didn't give any advice unless she asked." Open-Door Policy.

Grief is a highly personal experience and the support each individual requires can vary, which makes the support process even more challenging. Understanding the variation in each person's experience is valuable to better supporting their grief related needs. Data analysis revealed that coworkers accomplished this through the use of an *open-door policy*. An *open-door policy* was the physical and metaphorical opened office

door that communicated the availability of coworkers to bereaved employees whenever they wanted to discuss issues related to their loss. This discussion could vary both in breadth and depth. *Open-door policy* was communicated by coworkers when they gave the bereaved employee choice of the topic, they took the employee to a location outside of work and talked about the loss, they reached out to the employee outside of work hours, and they held off of giving advice until it was requested.

A valuable lesson to be learned from this research is that bereaved individuals want choice over when and what they choose to talk about as it related to their grief experience. Stacy explained that "trusted coworkers" asked her if she wanted to talk and that she "could say yes or no. If I said nope, they'd be like, 'Okay.' Just go back to work related conversations. They gave me the choice of going there without saying" (1a.). These "trusted coworkers" enabled Stacy agency over her desire to talk about personal life at work and how much or little she chose to divulge. Mary, Stacy's coworker, noted, "I remember telling her that if she wanted to talk about anything she could. We often talked in her office about our experiences with losing our parents" (1c.). Her communicative act to provide Stacy options over her bereavement disclosure, revealed an important negotiated step a coworker makes when attempting to support bereaved employees at work. Enabling choice also opened up doors for Mary engage in conversations that were supportive to Stacy in the future.

In addition to providing an open door to discuss loss, coworkers also utilized spaces outside of work confines that let bereaved coworkers disclose information about the loss. Lauren explained, "We [Lauren and Julie] would often go on walks together on

breaks and I just knew that would be a good place that she could talk about his passing if she wanted to" (10c.). This example emphasized that conversational space outdoors made for a comfortable environment to talk about grief related emotions Julie felt while at work. Lauren purposefully negotiated that space in order to provide support that Julie needed. Similarly, Mitch, Joe's manager, recalled,

> [Joe] seemed really beat [tired] that first week [after returning to work]. I suggested I buy him a beer after work. He took me up on the offer and I think it was good. We didn't get too deep but he talked about his brother. It's easier to talk about that stuff not at work. (8c.)

Mitch's suggestion to get a beer after work strategically permitted them to leave the workspace and move to a location that was "easier to talk about" about loss. This negotiated choice allowed them to have a conversation about Joe's brother that left disclosive boundaries, but opened up a conversational door for discussions of this nature in the future.

Another communicative way that coworkers negotiated boundaries around grief was by reaching out to bereaved employees outside of work. James, Steven's boss, recalled,

> I called him up the next day after the funeral to see how he was doing. He seemed as fine as one can be at the funeral but I know that's an overwhelming time with all the people. We just talked about how it went. (7c.)

James' emotionally supportive act was facilitated through his choice to make contact outside of work hours. He also made the choice to call Steven when he knew a significant moment in the bereavement experience (the funeral) took place. This opened up a conversation that allowed Steven to discuss how the funeral went and any other

information Steven wanted to disclose about the day of the funeral. James further articulated that "Anytime I knew he was doing something related to his mom's death. Like the funeral, or when he had to clean out her house, I would give him a call to see how he was doing" (7c.). One of the ways that James negotiated emotional support was to note significant loss experiences and then reach out to Steven after or during those experiences. This gave Steven the option to discuss as much as he chose and communicated that James acknowledged challenges Steven was facing in his personal life as they related to the loss of Steven's mother.

Understanding when and where to provide advice to a bereaved person was valuable for coworkers to consider when attempting to provide support. Jill, a fellow school psychologist with Melanie, expounded, "I know a bit about bereavement. But I didn't want my job to get in the way of her talking freely. So, I just sat and listened as a friend. I didn't give any advice unless she asked" (11c.). Jill made the decision to listen and only provide advice when asked. Even though she might have had clinical knowledge that could have aided her coworker, she purposefully chose to refrain unless requested. Likewise, Adam recalled, "Caitlyn [boss] would give me some advice, but only when I asked. I remember going into her office a few times after teaching and just venting to her about all the issues with my sisters after my mom died" (12a.). Adam's relationship with Caitlyn enabled him to both vent, but also seek advice. Caitlyn's use of an open door to discuss Adam's loss gave her opportunities to provide supportive advice when Adam requested. When I interviewed Caitlyn, she further clarified her supportive choices,

> I hated when people told me how they handled things after their parents died. So, I never tell people that. Adam was young and people don't usually lose their parents in their early thirties. So, if he asked for advice, I gave it, but not unsolicited. (12c.)

Caitlyn's supportive process was fueled by her own personal experience with loss and receiving unsolicited advice. This informed her choice to not give advice unless Adam asked. By utilizing experiential knowledge, she effectively negotiated emotional and informational support for Adam following his loss.

"Stop fucking being so hard on yourself!" Appraisal Support.

Prior research on social support indicated that an effective form of social support was appraisal support. *Appraisal support* is the communicated information that is useful for self-evaluation/esteem building. For bereaved employees, this was the support that helped them feel better about their role/identity in the organization and attempted to boost their work-related esteem. *Appraisal support* was communicated when coworkers took a supportive paternal role with bereaved employees, countered bereaved employee's personal doubts about their job efficacy, and defended their work-related actions in the face of critique.

Relationships in organizations evolve, and one of the causes of that evolution can come from the loss of a loved one. Stacy expounded the evolution of her relationship with Mary by stating,

> With Mary I would say that she started acting more like a mother to me because she could tell, at first especially, I wasn't really taking care of myself. She's older, she's in her fifties so she started telling me, "You need to relax. You need to not do this". Being a little more mom-ish towards me, even though we're coworkers, sort of on the same level. (1a.)

This example highlighted that negotiating support for Stacy was mitigated through Mary's "mom-ish" behavior. She was able to provide emotional support through this role and the access it granted Mary to provide appraisal support. Through her paternal role, she evaluated Stacy's health and encouraged her to relax at work and not overexert herself. This support enabled Mary to negotiate conversations in which Stacy could reevaluate her productivity adjustment post-bereavement.

This research has shed light on the fact that bereaved employees do feel internal and external pressure to perform and be effective employees. James, Steven's boss, recalled,

> Steven thought he wasn't doing a good enough job. I just kept insisting that he was. That it was okay to deal with his mom's death. It's funny cause I am younger than him, but I always tell him that 'there's lots more important than work in life.' (7c.)

This exemplar indicated concern that Steven had regarding his effectiveness at work following the loss of his mother. James negotiated this issue by supporting Steven's positive work identity and also encouraging him to understand that work is not the only important thing in life. This communicative act provided a new perspective on Steven's problem (Goldsmith & Albrecht, 2011). Crystal, John's boss, explained, "John was really concerned about his work. I just reassured him that he was doing well and to stop being hard on himself. I think I literally told him to 'stop fucking being so hard on yourself!'" (5c.). Crystal utilized appraisal support in order to assure John that he was indeed a good employee. Further, she attempted to make him realize that his form of personal evaluation was not appropriate and that it needed to be reassessed.

After bereaved employees returned to work, they experienced incidents in which they were harshly or unfairly critiqued for their performance. This critique was both internal and external. Aaron, a fellow college instructor of Anthony, recounted,

> [Anthony] told me how one day he just let his students out early cause he just couldn't do it [teach] anymore that day. I was just like 'hey you are a great teacher. Your students love you. Who cares if you had a bad day?' (6c.)

Aaron provided appraisal support by communicating that even though Anthony had a "bad day" teaching, Anthony's students still loved him and that he was still a great teacher. This example revealed that when a bereaved employee's personal life issues or feelings of being overwhelmed at work inhibit their job effectiveness, he might question his own value in that organization. Therefore, when coworkers are present during those times and are able to provide effective appraisal support, they can relieve some of the guilt and personal critique bereaved employees endure. Bereaved employees also were unfairly critiqued by other coworkers. Mark, a nutritionist working with Lynne, remembered,

> Our boss blamed her for something she didn't do and I remember she was furious. I just kept telling her he was a dick. She was great at her job and no one would blame her even if she did slack off. (4c.)

This example illustrated how bereaved employees are not exempt from taking organizational blame and in this instance were falsely accused of making a mistake. Appraisal support was communicated when Mark reassured Lynne that their boss was a "dick" and that their boss' evaluation was not one she should take to heart. His appraisal combated their boss' attacks on Lynne's positive worker identity. It enabled Mark to

negotiate an avenue whereby her performance, even if it were impaired, was okay and not one to be judged negatively.

Supporting Work-Life Stress from Cohabitant Relationships

The loss of a loved one creates many challenges in the life of a bereaved individual. When that individual also has to go to work, their bereavement experience can become more complicated because their investments are not solely focused on their responsibilities at home or personal relationships that are directly impacted by the loss. This situation can cause work–life stressors to accumulate. However, research indicates that employees may utilize their relationships at home to better aid the challenges they experience managing these work–life endeavors. Therefore, RQ3 posited the following: *In what ways do bereaved employees' relationships at home provide support for work–life stress?* Social support research specified effective ways that individuals may be supported by others. Through the process of procedurally coding the data I was able to extract descriptive communicative ways that *emotional support, instrumental support, informational support*, and *appraisal support* from cohabitants aided bereaved employees' management of work–life stress. The following section further delineates these communicative processes.

"I would sit and listen." Emotional Support

Each bereaved individual communicatively handles work–life stress differently. Managing the tensions that develop between work and personal life is daunting enough without the added challenge of coping with the loss of a loved one. *Emotional support* has been found to be a supportive way through which that personal relationships can aid

the burdens of and alleviate stress. *Emotional support* is person-centered, emotion-focused, and inductive communication. In order to provide emotionally supportive messages, the supporter had to understand context and the individual needs of the bereaved employee. This research indicated that *emotional support* from cohabitants aided in sorting through emotions, enabled a communicative space to vent about stress, and included nonverbal behaviors in order to support bereaved employees.

After the loss of a loved one, bereaved employees had to sort through varied emotions and often that resulted in dialogue with members of their household. Stacy recalled guilty feelings following her loss, "I remember one time I started crying and I was like, 'I'm so sorry, I feel like I've put so much on you.' He's [husband] like, 'It doesn't matter. This is what I'm here for.' He was really supportive" (1a.). Sean was emotionally supportive by being there for Stacy and allowing her to experience her emotions as they appeared interactionally. Sean further clarified that

> She would get into her routine and she'd be her regular self for a while, but then kind of all of sudden she would remember, and she would just kind of break down, and, you know, cry, and, you know, process it out loud. (1b.)

Allowing Stacy to process her emotions "out loud" kept the focus of the conversation on her needs in that moment. This emotionally supportive interaction improved Stacy's emotional state by providing a sounding board to openly discussing her emotions with Sean without fear of judgement or prescriptive comments (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998). Janelle reiterated this sentiment when discussing her husband's support,

> Bob was just really there to help me sort out the ambivalent feelings [toward going to work] that I had. That was probably the most helpful, was to try to help

> me, or even just listen to me when I was trying to figure out why I felt so conflicted. (2a.)

When Bob engaged dialogue that enabled Janelle to verbally "sort out" her ambivalent feelings about her mother's death, Bob was emotionally present for Janelle. This type of action emotionally supported Janelle by enabling her to work out her own personal struggles and through conversation, "figure out" why she had been so conflicted. It not only was person centered, but it also assisted the bereaved individual to process their own conflictions about the deceased person.

Cohabitants often become those relationships workers vent to about the day and any challenges or concerns that might have arisen. Bereaved individuals have the added challenge of negotiating grief while still grasping life's everyday challenges. Bill, Julie's son, recollected,

> My mom was really stressed about my grandma who lived, still lives with her. She broke down a lot about the stress of taking care of her because he [deceased partner] helped take care of my grandma a lot. Mainly she just needed to vent and would feel better. (10b.)

Bill's choice to move back in with his mother after her partner died provided a relationship outside of her mother-daughter, to vent about her challenges providing care for her elderly mother. He was able to listen to his mother's concerns about caring for his grandmother. Through conversations with her son, Julie was able to vent about her work-life problems, which in turn helped mitigate some of the stress she was experiencing.

Work post-bereavement also became a source of frustration for bereaved employees. Glenn, Lynne's husband, explained, "Lynne was really mad about her job right after her mom died. Her boss was not a kind man. Very unsympathetic. Blamed her

for many things that weren't her fault. I would sit and listen to her" (4b.). Glenn's presence to sit and listen to Lynne complain about her job supported her need to express her displeasure with work. Spending time listening to Lynne emphasized care and concern for her needs and focused conversational attention to the bereaved employee. McKenzie, Anthony's roommate, recalled that "[Anthony's] boss was shitty and had been shitty to him for a while. So, when his grandma died, she didn't even say sorry. He would vent about that and I would listen and usually talk shit with him" (6b.). This example explicated a way, listening, in which cohabitants have the ability to aid bereaved employees struggling with work stressors such as a "shitty boss." It also illuminated the inductive investment made through communal "shit talking" in order to aid stress relief. Through this interaction coping was accomplished that could diminish some of the stress of a frustrating boss (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996),

In addition to verbally supportive messages and non-verbal spending time with bereaved employees at home, cohabitants noted an increase in their haptic behaviors. Alex, Christie's husband, recalled, "Sometimes we would just be sitting watching TV together, and she would pause whatever program we were watching and just kind of breakdown and have her moment. I'd go hug her and try to console her" (9b.). Through hugging her, Alex attempted to console Christie grief emotions through his emotional and physical presence. Claudia, Joe's wife, informed, "We aren't the most touchy-feely couple. But after his brother died, he was way more affectionate and I think needed to be hugged, and kissed, and touched more than before" (8b.). By noticing Joe's needs for affectionate communication, Claudia attended to his desire to be more immediate with

her in their relationship. She inductively knew that he needed more intimacy while during his processing of grief over the loss of his brother.

“So, my mom didn’t have to worry about that too.” Instrumental Support

Work–life stress often comes in the form of household tasks and relational challenges instigated by living under the same roof. Negotiating these everyday communicative roles and responsibilities became even more problematic when one of the individual’s was suffering loss. Research has identified that *instrumental support* can buffer stress by providing service for others. *Instrumental support* was the service and tangible aid that cohabitants provided bereaved employees following their return to work after the loss of a loved one. Through this support they were able to buffer and relieve some of the work–life stress aggravated by the experience of grief. This research expounded that *instrumental support* was communicated by cohabitants managing the household, filling in for the deceased, and covering tasks normally handled by bereaved employees.

Interest in maintaining the household became less important after suffering the loss of a loved one. Christie explained, “I don't even know what else was going on at that time, but [Alex/husband] just took care of everything in the house that needed to be done at that time” (9a.). Christie’s example identified her struggle to be aware of the needs of the household after her mother’s passing. However, her husband was able to combat that struggle by providing instrumental support and “taking care of everything” outside her grief scope. After his grandmother died, Anthony remarked, “I had no motivation to do chores. It was nice when those were taken care of for me” (6a.). Not having to think

about household chores meant that he could think about his loss or ignore his loss without having to complete tasks unappealing at home. His roommate McKenzie recalled, "I started cleaning the apartment more. I am the messy roommate, but I remember trying much harder to clean the apartment" (6b.). McKenzie's motivation to clean the apartment more regularly came from her desire to relieve some of Anthony's stress at home because she knew he was inundated managing his grief. Coming home to a clean home was much more appealing than arriving to a dirty one. Therefore, by communicatively exhibiting concern for their home, McKenzie enacted instrumental support and helped buffer some of Anthony's work–life stress.

The loss of a loved one leaves many holes in the lives of those left behind. These holes often are roles those deceased individuals used to inhabit. This research identified a number of communicative ways cohabitants attempted to fill those roles. Sean, Stacy's husband, explained, "I definitely started doing a lot more chores around Sandy's [mother-in-law] house" (1b.). Sean supported Stacy by helping out Stacy's mother, who was also experiencing the loss of her husband/partner. Sean stepped in to work on projects at Sandy's home that normally Stacy's father would have done. Tangible aid at Sandy's home meant that Sean was also supporting Stacy's stress management because she did not have to assist her own mother and could rely on Sean. Bill, Julie's son, explained,

> I moved in with my mom. I tried to fill in for him [Julie's deceased partner] when it came to my grandma. So, I brought her [grandma] to doctor's appointments and stuff like that so my mom didn't have to worry about that too. (10b.)

First, moving back in with his mother acknowledged that Julie needed assistance after her partner died. Second, Bill started to take the grandmother to doctor's appointments so

Julie would not have to worry about getting her mom to the doctor. Third, Bill's communicative actions meant Julie had a trusted family member in her home caring for her mother while she went back to work. Bill's presence in the home alleviated some of the stress Julie experienced worrying about the safety of her own mother while she was at work once her partner had died.

In addition to filling roles that the deceased previously inhabited, cohabitants also covered specific tasks at home that made going to work easier. Claudia, Joe's wife, elucidated, "I didn't work at that time. So, I started making and bringing him lunch. I'm no Suzy-home-maker, so at first, he was kinda in shock. But he liked it. It was one less thing to do in the day" (8b.). Although Claudia clarified her help as something possible because she was not working at the time of Joe's brother's death, she nonetheless provided tangible aid to Joe who had to go back to work. He appreciated the fact that he no longer had to prepare of plan his lunch for work in the morning. Alex, Christie's husband, noted, "I definitely cooked more. Or picked up dinner. That was something she was in charge of normally" (9b.). Alex made the choice to fulfill the role of meal planner after Christie lost her mother. By taking on this role he communicatively aided Christie's ability to manage work–life challenges by having one less task to worry about at home. Glenn, Lynne's husband, remembered, "I would walk the dog in the morning, even though it was her job. That kind of thing. There was no reason she needed to do that" (4b.). Glenn's example indicated that even the simple act of walking a dog in the morning aided Lynne's ability to go to work in the morning with one less job to accomplish and hopefully decrease her work–life stress.

“No, you need to go to bed.” Informational Support

After the loss of a loved one, bereaved individuals do not always make the best or most informed choices for their lives. Therefore, it was helpful to have supportive relationships within the household to provide advice and guidance. Research indicates that *informational support* can aid the support targets management of stress. *Informational support* was the advice, suggestions, and information that cohabitants communicated to bereaved employees that alleviated work–life stress. This research explicated that *informational support* was communicated by cohabitant advice regarding bereaved employee physical health, guidance about work, and guidance about the processing of grief emotions.

Cohabitants have the distinct relational advantage to provide advice about bereaved individual’s health and wellness because they live with them. Stacy remembered, “[Sean would] be like, ‘No, you need to go to bed. You've been on the phone with your mom, everybody was crying, you need to do what *you* need to do.’” (1a.). Sean’s advice allowed Stacy the opportunity to care for herself. He recognized the amount of time she had been on the phone with her mother and the support she was channeling towards her mother, but not giving herself. His advice reframed the need for self-care during this stressful time. After Lynne’s father died, her husband Glenn remembered, “I had said, ‘Listen, you know, this is a tough time, whatever you want to do, I'm totally fine with ... let's just muddle our way through the next couple of months, and we'll figure it out’” (4b.). Glenn’s suggestion allowed them both the ability to

negotiate their own needs following the loss of Lynne's father. It opened a path that was not prescribed but lived based on contextual desires and demands.

Roommates that are suffering the same type of loss can provide a keen eye of reflection and awareness for individuals experiencing grief. Marissa, John's sister and roommate, recollected,

> I think he was partying too much after our dad died and one day, I had a talk with him and was like 'hey, I know you're sad. I'm sad. But you keep telling me you're doing bad at work and I keep seeing you go out. You need to stop going out. He did and he did better at work. (5b.)

Marissa's advice had more power to impact John's behaviors because she too was experiencing the loss of their father and chose to cope through more healthy behaviors. Although the advice might have been hard to hear, it was clear it was heard and followed because John started doing better at work.

Informational support from bereaved employee cohabitants was about personal but also professional choices. Sean recalled that Stacy was struggling with her productivity at work,

> I was able to reassure her, like, you know, as long as you're managing expectations of people, if you can't get a thing done on time, because you can't pull yourself together that day, or whatever, just go manage their expectations. Say [to coworkers], "Listen, I'm sorry, this isn't going to be done for a couple more days." I was able to offer some general workplace advice that was applicable to the situations. (1b.)

Sean's informational support aimed to aid Stacy's guilt over slower productivity at work. He not only communicated emotional support for her concern, but also suggested ways she could address coworkers if she needed extra time on a project. This type of informational support communicatively increased Stacy's sense of control (Malecki &

Demaray, 2003). Molly wanted her mother, Alice, to consider her own health after the passing of Alice's mother. "My mom is not the most physically healthy person. I remember telling her that she needed to take time off [work] after my grandma died because she was in so much physical pain [from working]" (3b.). Molly's suggestion focused attention on Alice's physical needs, which had been neglected while her mother was alive. Taking time off work alleviated some work–life stress that Alice experienced grieving the loss of her mother while managing personal health problems. Molly's informational support provided guidance and gave Alice permission to focus attention to her own life and health. Curt, Melanie's husband, made a similar plea: "I suggested many times that she take time off [work]. She never wanted to, but then the times that she did, she would always tell me how it helped" (11b.). Curt's informational support enabled Melanie to prioritize her own well-being and reassess her current work–life balance. Further, it helped to minimize, if only for the days she took his advice, her work–life stress.

Cohabitants have the distinct ability to recognize not only the physiological ways bereaved individuals are struggling with work–life stress but also the mental challenges experienced processing grief. Lori, Steven's wife, explained,

> Steven would come home pissed off at someone at work. But I know it was just that he was upset about Gloria [deceased mother]. I would go about it round about, but encourage him to talk about what was bothering him. It was always about her, not work. (7b.)

Lori's recognition that his frustration with coworkers was actually his anger over losing his mother aided her ability to provide informational support for Steven. By encouraging

him to talk about his anger, she guided his processing of grief over the loss and the ways he had been misplacing anger. McKenzie noticed her roommate Anthony was struggling with the loss of his grandmother. She expounded,

> I learned in my own therapy that it can be good to write letters to people even if you don't send them. I told him to write one to his grandma since he didn't get to say goodbye. I then jokingly told him I would write a 'fuck you' letter to his boss at the same time. (6b.)

This example emphasized how informational support can be activity oriented. Her advice to Anthony came from her own experience with therapy. Her assessment of his mental state suggested to her that the activity she proposed could be helpful. Stating she would write a "fuck you" letter to his boss made the somewhat clinical advice she provided, less serious should he choose to not write a letter to his grandmother. Mike, Adam's roommate, recalled, "I mean it wasn't fun living with someone that mad and sad and drinking too much, but it's what you do. I think that's why I encouraged him to go talk to someone [therapist]. Which did help him" (12b). Mike recognized that his roommate was suffering and not coping with the loss of his mother well. Although he tolerated Adam's behavior at that time, he also was able to suggest therapy as beneficial for his mental health. Ultimately, taking Mike's advice aided some stress that Adam experienced following his loss.

"It's really okay, you'll do better tomorrow." Appraisal Support

Losing a loved one can cause bereaved individuals to question many aspects about themselves and their character. Questioning one's identity can be quite stressful but is often experienced by bereaved individuals. Prior research has indicated that appraisal

support directly provides useful tools for individuals' negative self-evaluations. *Appraisal support* was the communicated information that is useful for self-evaluation/esteem building. This research shed light on the ways that cohabitants of bereaved employees relay those assessments. *Appraisal support* was described through assurances about the bereaved employees' work identity, utilized to buffer work related critiques, and re-evaluated familial roles.

This research has indicated that bereaved employees question their efficacy at work. After the loss of Stacy's father, she was preoccupied with her role at work. While discussing this preoccupation with her husband Sean, she delineated,

> He kind of put it into context and I would come home, especially at first, and be like I did no work today I feel so guilty. He'd be like, "you're more productive than a lot of other people. It's fine. It's one day. You're not going to get fired and you're going to get on your projects. You're going to do it on time, you need to trust yourself. Don't worry about it." He'd be like, "Other people have those kinds of days or whatever." I'd be like "I'm just missing this deadline…" [Sean would assure] "It's really okay, you'll do better tomorrow" (1a.).

Sean's response to Stacy's efficacy concerns served to reaffirm that she was more productive than many other workers even in the midst of experiencing grief over the loss of her father. His reassurance that it was only one day and that she would "do better tomorrow" exemplified appraisal support by challenging Stacy's use of this one workday to evaluate her totality as an employee. Joe explained, "After my brother died, I just didn't care as much [about work]. Claudia [wife] always made me realize that just cause I didn't care as much now didn't mean I wouldn't again. That it was okay" (8a.). The appraisal support that Claudia provided Joe enabled him to understand that it was okay to not care about work at different times in his life and that not caring after the loss of his

brother did not mean he was a bad employee. Her support aided the stress he experienced when examining his work identity post-bereavement. Alex, Christie's husband, recounted a conversation Christie he had,

> I remember telling her. "Do you show up every day? Do you get your work done? Do your kids [students] learn?" And her answer was "yes." Who cared if she wasn't happy and smiling and sometimes overreacted and yelled at a [student]? (9b.)

Alex's example reiterated that of Claudia's and Sean's. Alex communicatively provided evaluative questions for Christie to answer and in doing so, forced her to realize she was in fact doing her job. Even though she was not enjoying her job and more on edge than she was prior to the loss of her mother, she was still effective in her workplace.

Another way that cohabitants can provide appraisal support for bereaved employees' stress is to buffer critiques received at work. Mike, Adam's roommate, remembered,

> One of his coworkers was not very sympathetic and they were working on something together. He would always complain about her and how she made him feel like he wasn't doing a good job. I'd always remind him that one person's opinion is just that. One person. (12b.)

This example exemplified the way that communicating appraisal support can reframe bereaved employee's evaluative critiques from others. In this instance, Mike reminded Adam that he should not judge himself based on one person's opinion and that Adam is more than the sum of what one individual thinks. Mike's communicative message further supported the argument that appraisal support can provide new perspectives (i.e. "one person") on problems (Goldsmith & Albrecht, 2011). Glenn, Lynne's husband, reiterated a similar conclusion that Mike made to Adam when he explained,

> When [Lynne] would talk about her boss criticizing her work, I remember joking. "They hate us cause they anus." It is a dumb line from a movie that our son always used to say, but it would always make us laugh. It's kinda become a running joke thing. (4b.)

Glenn's example also used appraisal support to argue that one person's (boss) opinion might be "anus" or not important. Although a humorous interaction, Glenn's appraisal to Lynne enabled her to assess her own worth as an employee outside of the scope of one person, her boss. It also highlighted the way that humor can aid in the reevaluation of one's self and put critiques into question.

In addition to buffering organizational critiques, cohabitants of bereaved employees provided appraisal support for family roles in question. Molly, Alice's daughter/roommate, explained,

> She felt bad that her and her brother didn't get along. It's really that my uncle is an asshole. But she thought my grandma would think she [grandma] had failed raising them [to be good siblings]. I told her that she was a good sibling and that nana would never think that. (3b.)

Molly's example shed light on the ways that bereaved individuals struggle with their own identity as a child even after their mother had passed. Familial roles do not die when a family member dies. Molly provided appraisal support by reframing the way Alice thought about her mother's opinion. Molly utilized her knowledge of her grandmother to challenge the negative way Alice was describing herself as a sibling. Molly's intimate knowledge of her own mother and her grandmother made this appraisal more valuable and interactionally impactful. Bob, Janelle's husband, faced a similar challenge when Janelle discussed her role as a sibling:

> She had to do be in charge of all the funeral proceedings and everything related to her mom's death. Her sisters didn't really do anything and she would get frustrated with them. They made her feel like a shitty sister. I told her it's not a bad thing to argue and doesn't make you bad. (2b.)

Bob's use of appraisal support challenged Janelle's internalized model of what it meant to be a "good" sibling. He reframed her sibling arguments as a natural part of the sibling relationship and not an indication that she should view herself as a bad sibling because of she argued with her sisters.

Work Resources Enriching Home-Life

Work–life research indicated that the resources generated in one area of life, (i.e. work), can benefit roles that are held in another area. Therefore, bereaved employees have the ability to employ resources, such as organizational policy, knowledge, skills, or relationships to benefit their roles at home. RQ4a posited: *How do resources generated from work benefit bereaved individuals' roles at home?* Data analysis revealed two emergent communicative patterns whereby resources at work benefited bereaved employees home life: *accessible work-leave policies* and *nonofficial work assistance*. In order to better expound these two patterns, the following section delineates exemplars from the data.

"My boss insisted." Accessible Work-Leave Policies

All organizations have general practices and policies with regards to bereavement. Some policies stipulate paid bereavement leave, while others offer unpaid leave days bereaved employees may take off of work. All of the participants in this research had a bereavement leave policy, and on average, they each had three paid days off. *Accessible*

work-leave policies were transparent macro-organizational policies and procedures related to bereavement leave, sick days, and personal days. This research indicated that *accessible work-leave policies* were transparent when organizational members encouraged bereaved employees to use the policies in place, policies operated to facilitate outside work events directly related to loss, and policies allowed bereaved employees to focus on needs of their personal lives or families.

The most effective way that leave policies became utilized by bereaved employees was when they were communicatively encouraged to use the policies their organization provided. Lynne explained,

> When I spoke to HR to review how many vacation days I had left she also told me how many sick days I had acquired as well as personal days. She encouraged me to use those instead of my vacation days, which I did! (4a.)

This example explicated how transparency between human resources and bereaved employees can support employees use of leave offered. Steven recalled a similar experience to Lynne, "I got a three-day bereavement leave policy. I did not want to use them all, but my boss insisted 'this is why you have them.' I'm glad I did" (7a.). Steven's example showed how management, not simply human resources, encouraged him to take all of his paid bereavement days. This encouragement resulted in a positive outcome for Steven following the loss of his mother and one that was guilt free because his boss directly encouraged him to take those days off.

Transparent and accessible leave policies created avenues for bereaved employees to more easily navigate and plan events, such as funerals, quickly after their loved one's passing. Adam, a college instructor, recounted,

> I thought I was going to have to take sick days. But our business manager told me I could use bereavement days, which I didn't know we had. That was great cause … I had been sick already and I had to drive to L.A. [Los Angeles, CA] (12a.)

Adam's story exemplified how being made aware of his bereavement leave enabled him to drive to Los Angeles (in order to attend his mother's funeral. Further, he did not have to use sick days in order to go to his mother's funeral. Joe recalled, "He [boss] told me to take half-days instead of full days off. This helped because I never really needed a full day off other than for the funeral" (8a.). By taking half days, Joe was able to take care of personal matters without having to use a full day of leave. This communicated resource allowed Joe to better manage his time at work and home after his brother had died. Half-days also allowed Joe to accomplish work related tasks, while managing home needs associated to his loss.

Finally, accessible leave policies allowed bereaved employees extra time to spend with loved ones following loss. Alice, a kindergarten teacher, explained, "We get three days off and I used all of them. I am lucky it's so easy to get a sub [substitute teacher]. I didn't have to worry about my class during that time [right after death]" (3a.). Alice's ease with leave enabled her to focus her attention on more pressing home related matters. In recalling her ease with her organization's bereavement policy, Melanie stated,

> My brother died two weeks before school started, so technically I was on summer break. But since he was so young there had to be an autopsy and steps to determine the cause of death, which prolonged everything. I assumed I couldn't use my bereavement days, but I actually was able to which made it possible for me to spend more time with my parents who were staying from out of town. (11a.)

The complications over the sudden death of a young person slowed the funeral process. Although she was concerned those complications might limit the amount of days off, she could use, her school district honored her bereavement leave weeks after the death. This resource provided her time to spend with her parents, who were suffering the loss of their child.

"Made me promise not to work when I got home." Non-Official Work Assistance

Organizational life is often dictated by macro policies and procedures; however, many day-to-day functions are managed by micro-organizational practices. Resources are generated through relationships employees foster within their organization. *Non-official work assistance* were micro-organizational messages communicated by coworkers to ease transition back to work. This research indicated that resources are generated through these organizational practices when leave options are blurred, working remotely is an available option for bereaved employees, and management encourages subordinates not to take work home post-bereavement.

Providing bereavement options and policy were important resources generated from work to assist bereaved employees managing their home life, but having some blurred boundaries further assisted work-life challenges. Janelle explained,

> I think the official policy says that I can take three days. Altogether I was out for almost three weeks, but I worked a couple of days in there. But nobody questioned. But what was told to me was, "Do what you need to do, and work out what needs to happen at work with other people," and, "Do what you need to do to take care of this." (2a.)

Janelle explicated how less rigid leave options and no one "questioning" provided the leniency needed in her personal life to take care of salient matters related to the loss. It

helped that she was also a senior manager in her insurance firm and that resources are more readily available to management. Adam, a college instructor, remembered, “I made them all go to a campus event and turn in a reflection instead of physical class because I was not going to be back to town yet” (12a.). This example revealed that instead of cancelling class he was able to create an alternative class day that required students to attend an event and submit a reflection instead of physically go to class. This type of work flexibility enabled him to stay out of town, which he needed to do for his mother’s funeral, but also still perform work-related duties.

Another way in which non-official leave options aided bereaved employees was through remote work hours. Following the loss of his mother, Steven recalled, “I was encouraged to work from home. This made my life so much easier because if I had a phone call from my brother or something. I could take it as opposed to ignoring it in my office” (7a.). Working remotely from home allowed Steven the time flexibility to address pressing family issues while not sacrificing work obligations. Organizational resources also came in the form of coworker relationships and the knowledge they provided. Alice recounted, “Even though I was able to get a sub [substitute teacher], Kathy [coworker] texted me to let me know everything went well... it made me feel better to know” (3a.). Alice’s story shed light on how knowledge from coworkers about bereaved employees’ work obligations (i.e., teaching), may be non-officially monitored by a coworker and reported back to the bereaved employee. This informational resource allowed Alice stress less at home about what was happening in her classroom and afforded her the ability to be more present dealing with her mother’s death.

Many salaried managers often take work home with them as part of their job obligation or organizational expectation. Melanie, a school psychologist, recalled, “She [coworker] covered a number of my cases during that time so I had a much smaller load. This meant I didn’t have to take work home with me” (11a.). Melanie went on to further explain that “My boss demanded and literally made me promise to ‘not work when I got home.’ So, I never did” (11a.). This organizational demand and reduction in work “case load” aided Melanie’s ability to process her grief over the loss of her brother, but also allowed her to have more time while at home to focus on anything related to that loss without worrying about work.

Limited Work Resources Hindering Home-Life

Organizational policies and procedures do not always properly account for the personal needs of their employees. In many organizations, bereavement leave is not paid, or the amount of paid leave given could be a maximum of one day for the funeral. These types of limitations foster working environments that hinder bereaved employees’ management of personal challenges associated with grief and the death process. Although work–life enrichment suggests that resources from work may benefit home, it is just as equally possible that limited resources hurt bereaved employees’ roles and responsibilities at home. RQ4b posited: *How do limited resources generated at work hinder bereaved individuals’ roles at home?* Through data analysis, two primary themes emerged as salient: *limited leave policies* and *limited leave knowledge*. The following section further illustrates the ways in which limited organizational resources can problematize personal challenges post-bereavement.

“I could've really used some more time.” Limited Leave Policies

Many organizations strive to best support their employee’s work–life balance. Bereaved employees are often personnel that struggle managing work–life stress. Many times, organizations fail to provide all the needed policies and procedures employees require after the loss of a loved one. *Limited leave policies* were those organizational policies and procedures that provided less than adequate bereavement support/leave. This research further explicated that *limited leave policies* resulted in an inadequate amount of bereavement leave days, the discouragement to fully utilize leave options, and provided limited resources to handle home logistics following the death of a loved one.

Although all of the participants in this research had some form of paid bereavement leave and identified supportive resources provided by coworkers, often, that was not enough. Stacy explained,

> I was in charge of planning all the funeral. I was in charge of everything, my mom was useless, my brother was useless. For good reason. My brother was useless because he's a useless person. There was nobody really helping me with anything. It was crazy. I ended up taking the Wednesday off and then I was getting worried about my days because I didn't have any sick days. (1a.)

This exemplar pointed to the numerous additional responsibilities a bereaved employee juggles after the loss of a loved one. On top of all those tasks, Stacy had to worry about the amount of time she could take off because she did not have enough “sick days” to cover for her limited bereavement leave. Joe, a merchandising manager, asserted, “I can’t complain about how I was treated cause everyone was great. But the corporate policy of only three days bereavement leave for managers was not enough. The extra time I took cut into my vacation [days]” (8a.). Joe did not have enough bereavement days off, and in

order to manage all that was required of him at home, he had to “cut into” his vacation days. Instead of using those for vacation-related trips or events, Joe had to use them to help handle the loss of his brother.

Another way that resources available might be limited to bereaved employees was through organizational discouragement. Lynne argued,

> I think the most unhelpful thing though has got to be the fact that they didn't say take as much time as you need, or we'll figure out the time later. No one said that to me and meant it, and I could've really used some more time. (4a.)

Although Lynne had three days of bereavement leave, she needed more. Further, organizational members never encouraged her to take time off when she could have “used some more time.” Lynne, a nutritionist, had numerous organizational challenges following the loss of her father. She further explained,

> I got three days off [bereavement leave]. But when I called, well emailed, out that Monday I got a reply from my boss that did all but say, ‘hey Lynne, we are busy. Now is not a good time to be off. So, don’t take any more time off.’ So, I only took two days. (4a.)

Lynne’s experience emphasized that even though an organization may have minimal resources available to take time off for bereavement, organizational members might discourage the use of those resources. Therefore, Lynne chose to take one less day of paid bereavement leave.

Minimal resources, such as leave, made it challenging for bereaved employees to take care of the logistics of death. Alice, a kindergarten teacher who generally had a positive experience with her school after her mother died, still struggled with the amount of time she was given off. She stated. “I only got three days [bereavement leave]. Which

was barely enough to do anything. My mom had nothing taken care of so I had to figure out everything for the funeral, the cremation, the estate, it was overwhelming" (3a.). Alice was not prepared to handle all the choices she had to make once her mother died, and this required time spent at home dealing with those decisions. Even when bereaved employees are treated well by their organizations, the actual policies available may limit their ability thoughtfully manage the logistics of losing a loved one. Julie explained,

> I did not have enough [bereavement days]. Not only did I have to figure out everything for his [deceased partner] funeral I also had to figure out care for my elderly mother who he took care of in our home. It's not like a nurse can sit at her desk and make personal calls like you could at other jobs. (10a.)

Julie provided insight into the challenges faced by certain jobs. Many jobs enable employees to handle personal phone calls while at work, but being a nurse, Julie was unable to use work-time to manage care for her mother or her partner's funeral. This meant that time off from work was exceptionally valuable and when it was limited, this resource hindered her ability to negotiate those logistical challenges and incited more stress.

"My boss didn't even say I had bereavement leave." Limited Leave Knowledge

Depending on the organization, bereavement leave might be considered a taken-for-granted assumption. However, employee awareness of leave options related to bereavement is not always clear or well understood. Part of this communicative challenge is employee ignorance, but other parts of this challenge include lack of organizational transparency with regard to bereavement options. *Limited leave knowledge* was organizational confusion over bereavement leave policy and access. This research

revealed that *limited leave knowledge* stemmed from employee confusion over leave policy, a failure of organizational members to clarify leave options, and insecurity of bereaved employees to fully utilize their organizational options.

Bereaved employees were not always the most informed organizational agents when it comes to policy and procedure. Anthony, a college instructor, asserted, “I didn’t know we could take days off for bereavement so I had to plan accordingly” (6a.). His lack of knowledge made him have to “plan accordingly” and, in his case, take no days off and work around his teaching schedule. Anthony further articulated an organizational hinderance stating, “My boss didn’t even say I had bereavement leave. She just wanted to know if I took time off” (6a.). This example highlighted how organizational leaders further propagate employee ignorance regarding leave policy. His boss could have noted that he had bereavement leave, but rather just asked if time was taken off. The implication of the email being that taking time off was qualitatively different than if Anthony’s boss had stated taking time off for bereavement leave. Adam, another college instructor from a different college and academic discipline, explained, “I couldn’t tell you the amount of days that I was able to take off [for bereavement leave]. I just got people to cover my classes and had them [students] do other activities outside class” (12a.). Although he was able to get his class covered, his lack of policy knowledge required him to get people to cover his classes and create activities for students to do outside of class. Had he known he could take days off for bereavement, he might not have had to spend that time contacting other coworkers and creating activities, but rather address the logistical demands induced by the loss of his mother.

Lacking understanding of leave policies required bereaved employees to seek out advice from other informed or ill-informed coworkers. John, a sales representative in a call center, recalled, “I asked a coworker how many days we got off and she just said I should only take one. I never actually followed up on how many days I could take off until after, which was only one” (5a.). John’s lack of knowledge about bereavement leave led him to ask a coworker, who happened to be correct, but could have been wrong. An effective resource for bereaved employees would be clear and direct information regarding leave procedures, rather than having to ask a fellow coworker. Alice, a kindergarten teacher reported,

> I never was actually told officially by anyone the amount of days I could take off [for bereavement]. It was three, but no official email or conversation was had that said the amount of days I had. I ended up just taking other teachers’ words for it. (3a.)

Although at one point in time she was given information about bereavement leave policies and procedures, that time was likely when she was newly hired, and she had been a teacher for over twenty years. No organizational authority contacted her to directly state the amount of time she could take off and the options that were available; she had to take a “teachers’ words for it.” More overt clarity would have benefited Alice’s choices following the loss of her mother.

Taking time off work for personal matters induced insecurity in bereaved employees, who feared they would be judged for their choice to take leave. Lynne explained that in hindsight, “I would have taken all my [bereavement] days [3] and used my accumulated sick days. But I was scared to piss off my boss at the time. Who ended

up quitting three months later" (4a.). Lynne's example revealed that bereaved employees might fear organizational backlash for taking time off to deal with their loss outside of the given bereavement leave. Insecurity to take leave was also experienced by Melanie:

> I guess it felt weird asking how many days I got off after my brother died. Somehow, I felt judged for wanting to know. Like they thought I was gonna take more than I needed or something. Well I needed way more than that anyway. (11a.)

Concern over organizational members' judgment inhibited bereaved employees from taking time off work. Moreover, Melanie's example shed light on the way that concern over coworker judgment of time off encumbered her choice to utilize other leave options after the passing of her brother. Melanie felt insecure to take the extra time to process her brother's death and her fear of organizational judgment hindered her agency to utilize all options available to her.

Home Resources Enriching Work Roles and Responsibilities

Understanding how resources from home aid employees' ability to manage work related roles and responsibilities is a fruitful endeavor. Work–life enrichment research suggests that employees may use personal life resources to improve their work-related tasks. Bereaved employees experience added stress when at work managing multiple, potentially uncharted, logistical tasks associated with the death of a loved one. RQ5a posited: *How do resources generated at home benefit bereaved individuals' role at work?* Through data analysis two prominent communicative patterns emerged: *functional resources* and *knowledge resources.* The following section further explores the ways that resources at home can benefit bereaved employees' roles at work.

“Normal people bring their moms lunch; I was bringing her a shot.” Functional Resources

Everyday simple tasks like getting ready for work become more complicated for employees experiencing the emotional and physical demands of loss. Relationships at home provide resources that bereaved employees can rely on during the adjustment back to work following loss. *Functional resources* were resources generated through cohabitant relationships that contribute to completion of work. This research illustrated that *functional resources* aided bereaved employees work preparedness, provided personal needs from home while at work, and physically aided in the completion of work tasks while at home.

It may be a taken-for-granted assumption that an employee’s clothes will be ready for work in the morning. However, after the loss of a loved one, bereaved employees might live in different locations that lack their normalized morning routine and work essentials. Stacy, who lived with her mother immediately after her father died, recalled, “Sean [husband] would just go back and get me stuff from the house. I'd be like, ‘I need shoes and this shirt, and this underwear,’ or whatever and he'd go bring it back to me” (1a). Providing these resources for Stacy enabled Sean to assist in her ability to show up to work as a properly functioning employee, the definition of which includes dress. Christie explained that she spent the night at her father’s house after her mother died. She informed, “Alex would bring me clothes in the evenings to wear to work. They weren’t always what I would pick but it made getting to work on time possible” (9a.). This type of communicative aid provided the resources necessary for Christie to get to work on

time, even if it might not have been the outfit choice she would have made. Ultimately, arriving on time was accomplished by the resources that Alex provided.

In addition to providing resources to get to work on time, cohabitants also brought necessary personal items to the workplace that made it possible for bereaved employees function in their work role. Alice recalled, "My mind was not good then [after mother died]. I often forgot my insulin at home. Lucky Molly would bring it to me or else I would not have been able to teach" (3a.). Alice was "lucky" her daughter had moved back in with her because it allowed Molly to be home for such an emergency. Molly confirmed, "She is normally forgetful, but she was really forgetful. I had to bring her insulin to school more than once. Normal people bring their moms lunch; I was bringing her a shot" (3b.). Both Alice and Molly's examples illuminated how cohabitant relationships provide necessary resources that a bereaved employee required to physically function at work and, in this instance, life.

Many jobs allow bereaved employees to bring their work home with them, and therefore, it became a space for cohabitants to physically help bereaved employees complete job tasks. Anthony, a college instructor, remarked, "I know it's not right. But I bribed McKenzie [roommate] to help me grade papers with wine. I gave her a simple rubric and she would go through and try to write sloppy like me" (6a.). McKenzie confirmed this support: "I used to help him grade papers. I have a master's in education so it wasn't some huge unethical stretch. But he needed help and I could grade some simple undergrad papers" (6b). These two examples illustrated that cohabitants have the unique ability to be present at home and therefore are capable of physically aiding in the

completion of bereaved employee work tasks. Adam's roommate Mike remembered doing research "for his comps [comprehensive exams] because he insisted on taking them a month after his mom died. I also edited his citations because I know how to do MLA [research citation format]" (12b.). Mike's aid enabled Adam to complete his exams and not have to change his schedule even though they took place one mother after his mother had passed. This resource provided by cohabitation became instrumental in Adam's ability to complete his comprehensive exams even though he was newly bereaved.

"I was really questioning my judgement." Knowledge Resources

Personal relationships provide many fruitful sources of knowledge about work-related matters. Individuals that employees cohabitate with are markedly unique in their ability to provide information to the people they live with because they are around them more than the average social relationship. Bereaved employees' cohabitant relationships provided helpful knowledge related to work concerns and tasks. *Knowledge resources* were informative data provided by cohabitants that aided bereaved individuals' work effectiveness. This research demonstrated two communicative ways knowledge resources were provided to bereaved employees: providing a personal source or contact needed by the bereaved employee and providing insight into the bereaved employee's job and job choices.

Contacts and social networking are very important for any employee. Bereaved employees' cohabitant relationships yielded social contacts that allowed those bereaved employees to be effective in their job. Lori explained, "My cousin owns a distribution center warehouse. It actually sells a lot of product so I put Steven [bereaved husband] in

contact with him [cousin]. It ended up being a big deal" (7b.). Lori's knowledge of a source, her cousin, who could potentially provide sales for Steven aided Steven's ability to be effective at work. Connecting Steven to her cousin created a productive work relationship that would never had happened had she not been available to communicate her awareness with Steven at home. Adam remarked, "Mike was awesome during my comps [comprehensive exams]. He's really smart and knows a lot of professors at [university]. He put me in touch with one [a professor of his]" (12a.). As Adam's roommate, Mike was able to use his relationship with another professor to establish a point of contact for Adam that aided his ability to work on his degree. Living with a bereaved employee made for an increased amount of facetime that ultimately enabled conversations where cohabitants could listen and provide knowledge resources to bereaved employees that benefited their worker role.

In addition to providing outside relationships, cohabitants possessed knowledge that aided bereaved employees' assessments and choices before they were officially required at work. McKenzie, Anthony's roommate, remarked, "I am not an academic, but… I do have a master's in education. Like even though our fields weren't the same, he talked to me about what he was writing and I helped iron out some ideas" (6b.). In talking to his roommate about his ideas, Adam was able to better clarify his own thoughts. This clarification came from the knowledge that McKenzie's valued thoughts and opinions assisted Adam's deliberation. Janelle explained, "Bob [husband] is retired. But he used to work in insurance too. So, I could run ideas and questions by him all the time and he always gave me great advice" (2a.). Moreover, Bob stated, "I enjoy hearing about her

work because I worked in insurance. We often would talk, especially back then [near when her mom died], about what kind of plan and portfolio businesses needed" (2b.). Living with someone in the same field aided Janelle's ability to foster creative and informed business choices. His knowledge was helpful in aiding the choices she made for work-related tasks. By having an in-house informed cohabitant, bereaved employees were able to go home and discuss job-related concerns with someone not connected to their organization who was able to provide knowledge resources that assisted work choices bereaved employees needed to make.

After the loss of a loved one, work-related choices were not as clear as they might have been prior to loss because bereaved employees were managing multiple grief emotions as well as tasks associated with the death. Melanie, a school psychologist, explained, "Without breaking confidentiality I would provide Curt [husband] 'hypothetical' situations and background information on children. I really was questioning my judgement [after brother's death] and diagnoses so his input was invaluable" (11a.). Curt further elucidated,

> Her boss didn't want her to take work home with her, but often we would still talk about it. My job [psychology professor] gives me a lot of insight into hers [school psychologist]. Children are not my focus, but I could and did give feedback on diagnoses. (11b.)

Melanie's example illustrated how a cohabitant relationship can support work related decisions that a grieving employee struggled with more than she normally would. Having an informed and knowledgeable cohabitant that was in a related field assisted bereaved employees' clarity of work-related choices and decisions.

Home Responsibilities Hindering Work Role and Responsibilities

After the loss of a loved one, bereaved individuals have multiple relationships to manage. With these relationships come responsibilities to parents, children, siblings, or even friends. Most bereaved individuals have the additional challenge of negotiating relationships in which both parties are suffering loss. Responsibilities at home after the death of a loved one become increased. RQ5b posited: *How do responsibilities at home hinder bereaved individuals' role at work?* Through data analysis, two communicative patterns emerged that explained how home responsibilities hindered bereaved employees' roles at work: *physical demands* and *emotional demands*. The following section delineates these two communicative demands.

"I'd have to pick up even in the middle of class." Physical Demands

After a loved one dies, bereaved employees had additional responsibilities to the home and family. They had to plan a funeral, negotiate travel, visit the morgue, talk with attorneys, and so forth. These additional personal demands deterred bereaved employees focus from work related concerns to those of their personal loss and those relationships connected to the loss. *Physical demands* were the responsibilities associated with relationships at home that physically took time away from work. This research suggested that *physical demands* distracted bereaved employees from mundane or complicated job tasks and interrupted bereaved employees when they are around coworkers.

One of the most challenging aspects of going to work after losing a loved one was managing the relationships and the demands that come from those relationships at home. Stacy expounded,

> I was sitting there I was still dealing with it [work]. I'd get a call from the church about the flowers or I'd get a call from Aunt Betty who doesn't use email about when her flight is. I would keep interrupting what I was doing, so I didn't really get any work done for that whole week [of the funeral] I would say. (1a.)

Stacy's example shed light on the initial struggles bereaved employees face at work immediately after the loss. Her responsibilities to relationships from home prevented her from getting "any work done" the week after her father's death. Stacy further explained the impact of these types of interruptions,

> My phone would ring and my mom would be like, "I'm trying to write this letter to the lawyer, I need you to help me for an hour," or whatever. I'd have to stop my work to deal with that or follow up with it. (1a.)

Stacy's mother's demands forced her to "stop" work in order to help her mother write a letter to a lawyer. Her mother's communicative interruption forced her to physically stop work-related tasks in favor of personal responsibilities related to the loss of her father. Although her job and title within the organization enabled her to make these kinds of choices, they nonetheless distracted her while at work from completing work demands. When discussing his lack of preparedness of teaching the semester his grandmother died, Anthony elucidated,

> I was way less prepared that semester. I rarely did lesson plans and just hoped my old ones would work. Luckily, they usually did. But I just had no time. Most of my free time was spent on the phone talking to my mom because it was her mom who died. Usually she would just bitch about my dad (6a.)

Anthony's example demonstrated that his responsibility to provide emotional support for his mother outweighed his concern for planning lessons for his college students. College

instructors often do work at home, and therefore, his time to lesson plan for class was subsequently focused on his responsibilities to his mother and family after the loss of his grandmother, rather than lesson planning for his job.

Relationships at home also interrupt bereaved employees' interactions working with and around other coworkers. Christie, an elementary school teacher, recalled, "I don't get many breaks and I'm not *supposed* to have my phone on me when I teach. But my dad would call [after mom died] and I'd have to pick up even in the middle of class" (9a.). This example showed that Christie's need to prioritize her relationship with her father outweighed organizational rules that prohibited the use of cellphones when she was teaching. This kind of interruption was public, in front of her students, not permitted, but one that she felt she "had" to do out of obligation to her father. Joe recalled similar interruptions in front of management: "My boss never said anything but I frequently had to jump out of conference calls because of some family 'emergency' with my sister-in-law or my nephews" (8a.). Joe's dedication to his brother's family after his brother's death forced him to "jump out" of work-related meetings. Joe further explicated, "My brother's wife used to text me a lot right after he died. One day she sent me, I am not kidding you, twenty-two texts. I'd go call her in the parking lot" (8a.). This example (22 texts) illuminated the extent to which relationships from home compound a bereaved employee attempting to be productive at work or in meetings with coworkers with the needs of their relationships at home.

“Get a job and then I’ll call you and upset you with this shit.” Emotional Demands

Grief fosters an array of emotions that the bereaved might experience following loss. Expression of that emotion can be complicated alone, but also in relationship to family and friends who are also experiencing the same loss in their own way. Grieving family and friends often become the source of emotional support for each other, whether or not that support is effective or ineffective. Bereaved employees, therefore, are thrust back into work while still grieving and still being responsible for providing emotional support for others affected by the loss. *Emotional demands* were responsibilities bereaved employees had that invoked grief-related distractions from work and were instigated by providing emotional support. This research explicated that *emotional demands* were experienced when family relationships were emotionally draining during bereaved employee work hours, when conversations while at work with family angered bereaved employees, and discussions with family resulted in guilt.

Productivity at work served as a welcome distraction for some bereaved employees; however, family members’ communicative interactions via texts and phone calls hindered any disassociation bereaved employees wanted to channel at work. Stacy delineated,

> I remember one time; I was in a meeting and this was a few days after the funeral. My mom and my brother both texted me saying how sad they were, and how they were crying, they missed dad and “it's not fair.” One of them sent me a picture of me and my dad. My phone's just sitting in front of me in the meeting and I'm seeing this shit go by and I just started to lose it a little bit. I was like, just excuse myself to go to the restroom. My eyes started welling up I was trying so hard not to think about it. (1a.)

This exemplar indicated that Stacy was using work to distract herself from thinking about her father's death. However, her texts from her mother and brother prevented that from happening. Their messages thrust her right back into her grief while in front of others at work. Melanie had a similar experience with her parents after her brother's death:

> My mom and dad would call a lot when I was at work. I remember my dad called one-time sobbing going through my brother's things in the attic. After getting off with him I was just a mess. I don't remember a single thing I did that day and he called at like ten in the morning. (11a.)

This example illuminated that Melanie was so emotionally exhausted from talking to her parents that she did not "remember a single thing" she did at work that day. The demand of providing emotional support for her parents completely checked her out of what she was doing at work that day. Taking her parents' call while at work showed the value, she placed on her responsibilities to them after her brother died. Julie, a nurse, explained, "I don't have my phone on me. On my breaks I would get these awful voicemails from my mom as if she were dying. It was exhausting. I'd tell her to stop but she is ninety years old" (10a.). Managing her mother's care was an added challenge for Julie after the loss of her partner. Her mother's voicemails were negative and draining and also were something that she could not do anything about while at work. These emotional demands compounded the challenges that Julie already faced as a nurse in a hospital who wanted to use her breaks to relax.

Communicative interactions with family members while at work also dredged up anger for bereaved employees. Christie recalled, "One day my sister called crying going through our mom's clothes. It was my lunch break. I yelled at her. 'You don't work. I do.

Get a job and then I'll call you and upset you with this shit'" (9a.). Christie's frustration with her sister resulted in anger because her sister did not acknowledge that Christie needed to work and was busy doing her job. The sister's perceived preoccupation with her own needs for emotional support angered Christie and caused her to lash out at her sister due to the lack of emotional support Christie's sister did not communicate toward Christie. Adam recounted a similar experience about being frustrated with his sisters while at work:

> My sisters would call me up and piss me off. I was the executor of the will, but they constantly questioned me even if it was written in black and white on paper. I swear they purposely called me during my office hours or when I was teaching just to aggravate me when they were not getting their way [regarding funeral choices and estate]. (12a.)

Adam's frustration with his sisters stemmed from the fact that they were bothering him and, he believed, purposefully doing so while he was at work. He did not want to have to deal with their confusion over the will or "not getting their way" while he was at work. His responsibilities to his mother's estate made him have to take their calls, but it nonetheless was a source of frustration and anger that distracted him during work hours.

After a loved one passes, bereaved employees might feel guilt for a number of reasons. One such reason is their inability to be present for a loved one because they are physically at work. John recalled that after his father died, "I really am not supposed to leave my desk unless on a break. It was hard because my mom was a wreck and blowing up my phone non-stop. I felt like shit ignoring her" (5a.). Working in a call center made it impossible for John to take his mother's phone calls during work hours. Being unable to provide support for his mother caused him to feel guilty at work for the fact that he was at

work and not home with her. Further, his work role prevented him from supporting his mother who was in need after the loss of his father. This example highlighted the way that personal responsibilities when not met foster guilt within bereaved employees. When discussing the care her mother needed after the death of her partner, Julie explained,

> Bill [son] would call because my mom would go crazy on the nurse. One time she hit the nurse in the face with her cane on purpose. He [deceased partner] had experience handling this stuff. Bill didn't know what to do and I felt bad for him because he was trying so hard to step up for me. (10a.)

Julie's example illuminated the added challenge of provided in-home care for the elderly after a loved one dies. Julie's responsibilities at home were greater than a bereaved employee that did not have to provide care for anyone in their home. Although her son moved in to help her care for her mother, Julie felt guilty that Bill had to deal with her mother's antics. Her guilt stemmed from her inability to provide care for her mother because she was at work, but also guilt over the fact that her inability to provide care resulted in added responsibilities for her son. The challenging management of work-life endeavors created demands for bereaved employees from home that hindered their ability to function at work.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION: BEREAVED EMPLOYEE DUALITY

The loss of a loved one has a significant impact on bereaved individuals. This research aimed to better understand how those who have suffered loss manage their return to work. Work-life challenges are present in all employees lives without the compounding factor of bereavement. Research had identified that there are supportive ways that coworkers provide aid to their fellow coworkers, however minimal research has been conducted on bereaved employees return to work (Bauer & Murray, 2018; Hazen, 2003, 2008, 2009; Wilson et al., 2019), and the aid they do or do not receive while at work. Grief over loss is an emotion experienced at different moments in life and in the everyday lives of those that were recently bereaved. Miller et al. (2007) argued that *emotion at work* are those emotions that workers feel during work that are related to their outside lives. However, there was minimal research delineating the ways that bereaved employees experience grief at work and the emotions experienced due to loss while at work (Bauer & Murray, 2018). Moreover, there was nonexistent research describing the ways that bereaved employees' work role was supported or complicated by their relationships at home and their role at home was supported or complicated by their relationships at work. Therefore, this research posited the following research questions:

RQ1: In what ways do bereaved individuals express emotion at work?

RQ2: How are bereaved individuals supported at work by coworkers?

a. What are effective behaviors used by coworkers?

b. What are ineffective behaviors used by coworkers?

c. How do coworkers negotiate their use of social support?

RQ3: In what ways do bereaved individuals' relationships at home provide support for work-life stress?

RQ4a: How do resources generated from work benefit bereaved individuals' roles at home?

RQ4b: How do limited resources generated at work hinder bereaved individuals' role at home?

RQ5a: How do resources generated at home benefit bereaved individuals' role at work?

RQ5b: How do responsibilities at home hinder bereaved individuals' role at work?

Through multiple data analysis steps each of these research questions posited were answered. A thematic presentation of the descriptive interview data delineated the complex experience bereaved employees negotiate in their roles and relationships at home and work after the loss of a loved one.

The following discussion section navigates and connects the intersections of the findings of this research. First, a summary of the results for each of the research questions is provided. Second, conclusions are explicated across categories and expand upon theoretical memos written during the data analysis and write-up. Third, theoretical implications are provided for emotions at work and work-life integration. Fourth, practical implications are suggested for bereaved employees, cohabitants, coworkers, and

organizations based on this research. Fifth, limitations are explored that prompt avenues for future research in this area.

Summary of Results

In order to answer the descriptive questions posited, qualitative methods were employed. This study was comprised of 36 interviews total: 12 with the bereaved employee, 12 with a cohabitant to the bereaved, and 12 coworkers. This meant that there were 12 groups of three. Data analysis utilized procedural coding to identify existing categories described in the literature and emergent codes through data analysis procedures. Over the course of data analysis patterns of communication were identified that revealed the ways that each of the research questions were answered.

RQ1 asked: *In what ways do bereaved individuals express emotion at work?* The following communicative patterns were identified: *out of body experience, grief management, intentional context for emotional expression,* and *emotions at work.* This data suggested that managing conflicting emotions regarding work following loss can result in an *out of body experience* while at work. This was described as feeling out of place at work due to thoughts related to the loss or being uncomfortable with organizational work. Bereaved employees used g*rief management* to control emotions, emotional expression, and thoughts experienced at work associated to the loss of a loved one to perform professionality. *Grief management* was communicated when bereaved employees wore professional clothing and makeup, had limited space to process the grief, and when they masked personal challenges or problems at work. The *intentional context for emotional expression* was a marked choice made by bereaved employees at work.

Bereaved employees engaged *private expression* when grief-laden emotions occurred alone or in an isolated location chosen at work. Bereaved employees also disclosed *confidential expression* when grief laden emotions were communicated to a coworker viewed as a confidant. Prominent emotions were experienced and expressed by bereaved employees at work. Bereaved employees communicated *negative emotional expression* while at work when harboring issues related to their grief, or when work problems intensified because of their grief. Common negative emotions expressed were anger, frustration, impatience, resentment, and sarcasm. *Positive emotional expression* was communicated by bereaved employees to show appreciation for their coworkers and enjoyment experienced with their coworkers.

RQ2 asked: *How are bereaved individuals supported at work by coworkers?* In order to more thoroughly answer this question, three sub-questions were posited. First, RQ2a asked: *What are effective behaviors used by coworkers?* Data analysis suggested that prominent socially supportive behaviors for bereaved employees were: *emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support. Emotional support* relied on supportive coworkers understanding the context of a situation and then inductively knowing what to do or say in order to aid bereaved employees. *Instrumental support* was communicated through coworker actions that enabled leniency completing organizational tasks, assisted completing work related tasks, and allowed for a more flexible work schedule. *Informational support* was communicated when coworkers suggested that bereaved employees take better care of themselves, provided information about

organizational leave policies, and offered suggestions regarding bereavement challenges faced outside of work.

RQ2b asked: *What are ineffective behaviors used by coworkers?* Data analysis revealed that ineffective coworker support was communicated through perceived: *lack of empathy, business only, and assumed ineptitude. Lack of empathy* were perceived self-centered coworker messages that minimally communicated or were void of compassionate communication toward bereaved employees. A perceived *lack of empathy* was communicated when coworkers did not acknowledge the loss, focused their attention on their own problems, and provided placated responses about bereaved employees loss. Coworkers communicated *business only* when they ignored bereaved employees' loss by focusing on work-related concerns by: only accounting for the procedural business requirements of loss, micro managing bereaved employees to make sure they were doing their job, and reprimanding them for distractions related to grief. *Assumed ineptitude* were the implicit or overt coworker messages that suggested bereaved employees were unable to complete tasks at work or were failing at work in part because of their loss. Coworkers communicated these unsupportive messages by lowering workload expectations, stepping in to help the bereaved employee regardless if they asked for assistance, and blaming bereaved employees for worsened productivity.

RQ2c asked: *How do coworkers negotiate their use of social support?* Data analysis highlighted that coworkers were able to effectively negotiate social support for bereaved employees through: *acknowledgement, open door policy, and appraisal support.* Coworkers communicated a*cknowledgement* through artifacts and short or

extended interactions with bereaved employees that focused attention on their grief or bereavement experience. *Acknowledgment* was accomplished through tangible bereavement artifacts, nonverbal actions, and showing interest in the bereaved employees' loss. An *open-door policy* was communicated to bereaved employees through the availability of emotionally supportive coworkers whenever bereaved employees wanted to discuss issues related to their loss. This discussion could vary both in breadth and depth and was communicated when coworkers gave bereaved employees choice of the topic, took the employees to a location outside of work, reached out to the employee outside of work, and held off advice until it was requested. Finally, coworkers communicated *appraisal support* when providing information useful for self-evaluation/esteem building. *Appraisal support* was witnessed when coworkers took a supportive paternal role with bereaved employees, countered bereaved employees' personal doubts about job efficacy, and defended their work-related actions in the face of critique.

RQ3 asked: *In what ways do bereaved employees' relationships at home provide support for work-life stress?* Procedural coding aided the identification of descriptive examples of *emotional support, instrumental support, informational support*, and *appraisal support* communicated via cohabitants toward bereaved employees in order to aid their management of work-life stress. *Emotional support* from cohabitants assisted in sorting through emotions, fostered space to vent about stress, and included supplemental nonverbal behaviors needed by bereaved employees. Cohabitants communicated *instrumental support* by managing the household, filling-in roles the deceased previously

held, and covered tasks normally handled by bereaved employees. Cohabitants communicated *informational support* by providing advice regarding bereaved employee physical health, work, and the process of grief emotions. Additionally, cohabitants communicated *appraisal support* when they assured bereaved employees' competent work identity, buffered work-related critiques, and aided re-evaluation of familial roles.

RQ4a asked: *How do resources generated from work benefit bereaved individuals' roles at home?* Data analysis revealed two prominent communicative patterns: *accessible work-leave policies* and *non-official work assistance*. *Accessible work-leave policies* were transparent macro organizational policies and procedures attending to bereavement leave, sick days, and personal days. This research indicated that *accessible work-leave policies* were communicated when organizational members encouraged bereaved employees' use of policies in place, policies operated to facilitate outside work events related to loss, and policies allowed bereaved employees to focus on needs of their personal lives or families. Coworkers communicated *non-official work assistance* by easing bereaved employees' transition back to work. *Non-official work assistance* was communicated through the purposeful blurring of organizational leave options, provided remote work options, and management encouraged subordinates not to take work home post bereavement.

RQ4b asked: *How do limited resources generated at work hinder bereaved individuals' role at home?* The two primary themes that emerged from the data were: *limited leave policies* and *limited leave knowledge*. *Limited leave policies* were organizational policies and procedures that provided less than adequate bereavement

support/leave. *Limited leave policies* manifested through inadequate bereavement leave, discouraging the full utilization of leave options, and providing limited resources to handle home logistics after loss. *Limited leave knowledge* was communicated through organizational confusion over bereavement leave policy and access. *Limited leave knowledge* was incited through employee lack of awareness of leave policies, a failure of organizational members to clarify leave options, and insecurity of bereaved employees to fully exploit their organizational options.

RQ5a asked: *How do resources generated at home benefit bereaved individuals' role at work?* The two categorial resources that emerged from data analysis were: *functional resources* and *knowledge resources.* Cohabitants fostered *functional resources* for bereaved employees when they aided in the capacity to complete work. *Functional resources* aided bereaved employees work' preparedness, provided personal needs from home while at work, and physically assisted completion of work tasks while at home. Cohabitants provided *knowledge resources* to aid bereaved individuals' work effectiveness. *Knowledge resources* were communicated when cohabitants provided a personal contact needed by the bereaved employee for work related matters and relaying insightful job and job choice knowledge to bereaved employees.

RQ5b asked: *How do responsibilities at home hinder bereaved individuals' role at work?* Two communicative patterns emerged that explained how home responsibilities hindered bereaved employees' roles at work: *physical demands* and *emotional demands*. Cohabitants created *physical demands* when their needs took time away from bereaved employees' work. *Physical demands* distracted bereaved employees from mundane or

complicated job tasks and interrupted bereaved employees when they were around coworkers. Cohabitants created *emotional demands* when they invoked grief related distractions for bereaved employees while at work. *Emotional demands* were experienced when family members emotionally drained bereaved employees during work hours, conversations with family members angered bereaved employees during work hours, and discussions with family members resulted in guilt feelings at work.

Conclusions

This research was novel in its choice of topic and methodological design, which resulted in rich descriptive data that effectively answered the research questions posed. Upon examining the totality of this research, a number of prominent conclusions reflect the challenging communicative environment that bereaved employees face at work, attempting to be productive employees, while simultaneously experiencing grief. The following section further delineates the conflicting duality embodied by bereaved employees.

Bereaved Employee Duality

The most prominent conclusion that this research explicated was the embodied duality bereaved employees navigate while at work. Bereavement itself is a visceral duality of both wanting the deceased loved one present, while having to experience daily life without them. When bereaved employees return to work, they experience a duality of conflicting emotions regarding that return. This conflict is characterized by simultaneous tensions embodied through bereaved employees' identity, communicative actions, and relationships. These tensions are not to be confused with the dialectical tensions found in

relational dialectics theory (Baxter, 2011; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Dialectical tensions are grounded in Bakhtin's (1981) concept of dialogism, and are characterized by a pull between oppositional forces in social phenomena. Whereas dialectical tensions reveal "opposites [that] mutually define each other rather than develop separately" (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016, p. 75), this research explicated that bereaved employees' tensions are at odds with each other, but are not defined by each other. Moreover, these dual tensions are characterized by competing desires rather than two poles that exist on opposite sides of a dialectic (Baxter, 2011). These tensions develop separately and often times underlie employees' general work-life conflicts absent of grief.

Ample research has addressed the numerous work-life conflicts that are experienced by employees. Research has demonstrated that outside of the grief experience, work-family conflict negatively impacts employees' health and well-being (Frone, 2000; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Major, Klein, & Ehrhart, 2002) as well as organizational performance (Allen et al., 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Therefore, competing desires are already present within employees' work-life tensions. However, bereavement complicates naturally occurring work-life tensions.

Bereavement acts as 'rupture,' or a critical event after which the bereaved employee will never think, feel or act the same (Foucault, 1970). Bereavement interrupts employees' work-life conflict and presumed balance by bringing about emotions that provoke sensemaking (Weick, 1995). When bereavement interrupts employees' work-life, they are initially confused, and according to Weick (1995), can only subsequently give meaning to this interruption. After their initial return to work, bereaved employees

have to make sense of work in relation to loss. This sensemaking may result in changes to their world view, require reframing the way they view work-life balance, and navigate an embodied duality as a bereaved employee. Subsequently, bereaved employees must generate interventions to make sense of their new reality (Weick, 1995, 2001). Through these interventions, competing desires already present in bereaved employees work-lives are amplified, and previously unclear views of their organization's culture, values, and expectations become magnified in the wake of loss.

Bereaved employees experience an unavoidable embodied duality because competing desires become amplified after loss. In order to manage this duality, bereaved employees undergo communicative challenges accommodating the demands of each desire. Unlike dialectical tensions that experience a power shift from one pole of the dialectic to the other (Baxter, 2011; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), bereaved employees experience simultaneously occurring competing desires. These competing desires vie for attention and action on the part of the bereaved employee. Competing desires are unlike dialectics because when one desire appears more prominent, the competing desire does not become more obscure. For example, one day both desires may compete for attention and action with the same unrelenting persistence, while on another day neither desire may feel flagrant. The apparent reduction of one desire does not mitigate the other, and the notion of balance is not a potential way to reframe these tensions because they do not exist on the same plane. The tensions experienced by bereaved employees' competing desires are on two separate, simultaneously competing, communicative planes.

The bereaved employee duality is revealed through the embodied competing desires present in bereaved employees and manifests in work-life stress. This duality explains the challenges that organizations, coworkers, family, and friends have supporting bereaved employees. Competing desires underscore the complexities of the bereaved employee experience. Awareness of their competing presence explains why one bereaved employee may want to be comforted at work, while another may want to focus on the work-related task at hand. The idea that bereaved employees have one need or desire vying for attention and action at any given time is directly contrary to the findings of this research. Subsequently, a bereaved employee is unlikely experiencing only one emotion, they are more likely experiencing many competing emotions that at different times of the day, rise in communicative prominence. For this reason, communication research has a distinct advantage to mitigate this embodied work-life stress.

This research exemplified that understanding the present, contextual needs of bereaved employees is of utmost importance to providing necessary support. Due to the way that bereavement magnifies work-life tensions, organizational bodies, coworkers, family, and friends should focus their attention on understanding those competing desires. Specifically, these competing desires manifest around bereaved employees' physical work environment, grief experience, worker identity, and organizational support. In order to explicate this duality, the following competing desires are explained: *present vs. absent, disassociation vs. association, bereaved worker vs. competent worker,* and *aid vs. independence.*

Present vs. Absent

This research suggested that bereaved employees have simultaneous desires to be present at work and at the same time absent. *Present vs. Absent* was experienced when bereaved employees navigated their embodied work environment. Bereaved employees desired to be *present* at work, in their office, managing daily tasks, and interacting with coworkers. Going to work and being in the office fostered normalcy to their world that had just been ruptured. However, they had competing desires to be *absent* from work. This desire vied to be at home, managing household tasks, and interacting with family and friends. These two desires were simultaneously competing throughout the workday, and were negotiated privately or with coworkers.

Bereaved employees had an embodied desire to be present in the daily events that took place at work. For example, bereaved employees were upset when they were excluded from meetings due to their loss: "You don't need to come to this meeting…they assumed they knew what I needed" (1a.). Bereaved employees wanted to decide for themselves what they would be present for at work, and not have other employees or managers decide for them. Bereaved employees also sought to be present through email exchanges: "he took me off of the emails because of my 'personal issues' [brother dying]" (8a.). Being taken off emails made the bereaved employee less aware of what was going on regarding his account. Although email exchanges are computer mediated, removal limited his ability to be virtually present and therefore rendered him unaware of the needs of his client.

Although bereaved employees desired physical presence at work, they also had a desire to leave the physical workspace. For example, “I'd go for a walk or try to do something to try take myself out of the situation” (1a.) Leaving that physical workspace enabled bereaved employees to clear their head and cope with the emotionally daunting task of being at work after their loved one died. Additionally, bereaved employees admitted: “I definitely didn’t want to be there. I didn’t want to see those people. I didn’t want to hear about their life. I didn’t care about anything there. It wasn’t important” (9a.). Presence at work was simultaneously jarring and the lives of bereaved employees’ coworkers seemed unimportant compared to their experience. Bereaved employees also mentioned that: “meetings over the phone with my merchandizers [made it] so I didn’t have to be in the office as much. Which was really great because I was so busy at home” (8a.). Absence from the physical work environment for many bereaved employees was necessary to achieve tasks at home.

Disassociation vs. Association

This research explicated that bereaved employees had simultaneous competing desires to use work as a means to disassociate from their grief related emotions and to associate with grief while at work. *Disassociation vs. association* was experienced when bereaved employees managed their embodied emotional reactions to grief when at work. Bereaved employees desired to use work as a means of *disassociation* from the emotional burden of their loss, home relationships, and home responsibilities. However, bereaved employees also desired to *associate* with grief laden emotions at work, contemplate their loss, and discuss their experiences with coworkers while at work.

Disassociation was noted in bereaved employees embodied performance of professionalism at work: “I started dressing up more for work after that. Not sure if it helped me. But it masked some of what I was feeling” (12a.). Using their “professional” outfit enabled bereaved employees to disassociate from the unprofessional emotional weight experienced internally. Bereaved employees disliked when other coworkers interrupted their ability to use work as a means of disassociation: “She [boss] brought it [dad’s death] up at a team meeting. So, after everyone kept asking me how I was” (4a.). The bereaved employee wanted to function in the meeting like everyone else and bringing up the loss forced her to have to associate with that loss, publicly at work. Further, bereaved employees desired to use work to distance themselves from their grief: “I probably would have been able to get out of my own head a little more and just focus on what I needed to do” (1a.). Bereaved employees hoped that a focus on work would enable them to disassociate and escape their constant thoughts about the loss.

Association was recalled throughout bereaved employee interviews as well. Bereaved employees felt frustrated when they could not embody their grief laden emotions when in front of coworkers: “You can’t cry or be sad. You have to act happy or happy-ish” (5a.). Bereaved employees did not want to always mask their embodied grief at work. Additionally, bereaved employees became upset when coworkers did not acknowledge their experience or grief: “She knew she died. And she never said one thing to me about my mom” (9a.). They expected that coworkers would use interactions to associate with their grief, even if brief. Finally, bereaved employees desired to communicate their embodied grief with other employees they trusted: “I was emotional

with her. I wasn't bawling but I did openly cry" (1a.). When they felt safe, they wanted to be able to talk to coworkers about their emotions and associate with their loss to those who were invested in their personal experience.

Bereaved Worker vs. Competent Worker

This research expounded that bereaved employees desired to be acknowledged as both a *bereaved worker*, but also a *competent worker*. *Bereaved worker vs. competent worker* was an opposing identity desire whereby bereaved employees sought to be viewed as someone whose bereavement was accepted by organizational members, but also someone who was good at their job. When bereaved employees desired to be viewed as a *bereaved worker*, they valued exceptions allotted for their emotional displays, productivity, and appearance. However, bereaved employees simultaneously wanted to be viewed as a *competent worker* that maintained productivity, remained professional, and was viewed no differently after having lost a loved one. The notion of worker competence reflected by bereaved employees, was one communicated by macro-organizational narratives and societal grand narratives rooted in entrepreneurship.

Bereaved employees utilized their *bereaved worker* identity status to manage potential confusion coworkers had with their behavior following loss: "She [coworker] actually noticed on a conference call with somebody else, I was kind of out of it, and so then I told her why I was out of it" (2a.). Explaining that she was "out of it" because she was dealing with loss, enabled her to explain her lack of focus and be accepted due to her bereavement status. Being identified as a *bereaved worker* also benefited bereaved employees needing a break or release from work: "told me I needed to go home and

sleep. I didn’t want to cause I didn’t want to use a sick day. I already used my one bereavement day. But she was right” (5a.). When coworkers noticed that bereaved employees needed some relief from their job and granted them that relief, bereaved employees welcomed that acknowledgment.

Bereaved employees also had an overwhelming desire for their worker identity to be completely separate from their loss. *Competent employee* was challenged when bereaved employees were no longer viewed the same: “I felt very labeled. I wasn't myself. I wasn't the person who they've known for two years, I was somebody going through a loss” (1a.). Bereaved employees wanted to be organizationally viewed no differently and coworkers to treat them no differently than they had prior to the loss. Further, bereaved employees were frustrated when managers surveilled their work: “I know she was looking in to check to make sure I was doing my job” (6a.). Surveillance angered bereaved employees because it implied their competency was lacking due to their loss. Additionally, bereaved employees had the clear objective goal to embody a *competent worker*: “I was focused on acting professional and trying to still maintain my commitments and keep a very polite attitude towards everyone” (3a.) and hide instances of grief that could muddle that image: “I didn’t want to be that teacher who cries at the drop of a dime” (6a.). Bereaved employees sought to put forth the image that they were nothing less than what their organization and organizational members expected someone in their role to fulfill.

Aid vs. Independence

This research revealed that bereaved employees desired to receive aid from coworkers, but also desired their independence. *Aid vs. independence* was the competing desire that was manifested through bereaved employees' relationships with coworkers and coworkers' communicated supportive actions. *Aid* was communicated through coworker relationships when bereaved employees accepted coworker support that acknowledged their embodied grief. However, *independence* was communicated by bereaved employees to establish their embodied self-sufficiency in spite of their grief.

Bereaved employees desired *aid* in their coworker relationships in order to assist their ability to function at work while managing the emotional burden of loss: "I seemed pretty out of it. So, they gave me a little bit of kind of grace period" (1a.), "She always made extra copies for me without asking" (3a.) and when coworkers "stepped in on some cases during that time so I had a more manageable load" (11a.). In many instances bereaved employees desired some aid, at least initially after the loss from coworkers. Additionally, *aid* was experienced when coworkers provided necessary emotional support in the workplace that relationships at home could not exclusively manage: "It was someone else to talk to other than my wife" (7a.). Bereaved employees desired to self-disclose their personal challenges with select confidants in order to process emotions that they couldn't discuss with cohabitants.

Bereaved employees also desired to established their *independence* while at work by forgoing organizational assistance or experienced frustration from too much organizational aid. *Independence* was sought out when employees felt their organizations

or coworkers were providing too much support following their loss: “I didn’t want to be the guy everyone had to help out. I was never that guy” (8a.). Bereaved employees desired to reestablish their self-efficacy in the workplace. Additionally, their embodied desire to assert *independence* created interactional frustration when coworkers assumed they needed aid because of their loss: “She told me, ‘I don’t think you can manage doing the methods section alone. I will help.’ I didn’t say I needed it” (12a.). When coworkers took away bereaved employees’ work-related task independence, bereaved employees became upset even if the intention of the coworker was to help.

Theoretical Implications

The goal of this research was to navigation the complex emotional world bereaved employees experience when they return to work following the loss of a loved one. Extant research indicated that bereaved employees struggled returning to work and had emotional challenges resulting from their loss that were experienced while at work (Wilson et al., 2020). However, limited research had been conducted with bereaved employees, let alone their emotional experiences at work following loss (Bauer & Murray, 2018; Eyetsemitan, 1998; Hazen 2003). Therefore, there was a substantial theoretical gap in the literature that failed to addressed the experiences of bereaved employees. This research did however utilize theory on *emotion at work* (Miller et al., 2007) and work-family conflict/work-family enrichment (Barnett, 1998; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2001; Haas, 1999) to better frame the research questions and aims of the study. The following section further explicates emotion at work and a model of work-life integration based on this research.

Emotion at Work

Existing theoretical models of emotion and organizations termed the process of experiencing emotions from home life at work as *emotion at work*, or emotions unrelated to work experiences (Miller et al., 2007). *Emotion at work* is similar to Weick's (1969) concept of partial inclusion. However, prior to this research, *emotion at work* has been substantially understudied (Bauer & Murray, 2018; Hazen, 2003). A substantial theoretical implication of this research is illuminated by the nuanced communicative ways that bereaved employees *do* express *emotion at work.*

First, bereaved employees experience an array of *emotions at work*. Bereaved employees communicated negative emotions while at work and through other organizational relationships facilitated through their job. Bereaved employees might lash out at vendors or coworkers, make snide/sarcastic comments to coworkers, or engage in gossip. Although these expressions of negative emotions may happen in ordinary work relationships, this research indicated that grief further compounded their work-related frustrations and enhanced negative emotional expressions made while working. This implication is similar to research that argues exposure to stress in one domain may lead to irritability, fatigue, or preoccupation with the problems in that role that limit individuals' ability to meet the requirements of another role (Greenhaus & Beutell,1985).

Although one might assume that bereaved employees only express negative emotions while at work, this research contended that they do express positive emotions as well. Therefore, *emotion at work* is not always negative. Even when the subject matter, bereavement, is typically viewed as a negative experience, positive displays of emotional

expression about bereavement are communicated in the workplace. The most prominent expression of positive *emotion at work* was gratitude. Bereaved employees communicate gratitude for coworker support/aid, as well as happiness and humor with coworkers. These instances of positive emotional expression are directly tied to the support bereaved employees received because of their loss, or communicated during conversations about humorous situations only experienced due to their loss. Therefore, communication within coworker relationships has the ability to reframe discussions regarding a negative personal experience, bereavement. Moreover, it is through dialogue with coworkers that bereaved employees communicate positive *emotion at work*. Communicative dialogue with organizational members or customers can exacerbate negative and positive *emotions at work*, whether or not that conversation is related or unrelated to grief.

Second, bereaved employees' expression of *emotion at work* considers for who and when that expression takes place. There are instances when bereaved employees lose control over their ability to manage their emotions related to their grief experience, however this research suggests that much of their expression of *emotion at work* is thoughtful. Often bereaved employees engage emotion control to suppress their grief emotions in order to 'act' professional at and for work. This expands notions of stifled grief (Eyetsemitan, 1998; Hazen 2003), and argues that professional displays may be used to hide grief emotions felt while at work. Putnam and Mumby (1993) assert that the bureaucratic system perpetuates the notion that employees must be rational and control emotions. This research suggests that the expression of *emotion at work* is often intentional or rational.

The expression of *emotion at work* is contextually tied to organizational locations and specific coworkers in order to control when grief emotions are expressed. Bauer and Murray (2018) found that bereaved employees' expression of grief was constrained by gender, work status, relationships, and identity. This research further explicated that bereaved employees thoughtfully chose to privately express their grief related emotions when they were concerned those emotions could be viewed negatively and when they wanted to express overt negative emotions such as rage or anger. Additionally, bereaved employees intentionally chose coworkers, who they viewed as confidants, in order to express *emotions at work*. Confidants were those coworker relationships that bereaved employees felt safe to be vulnerable with when expressing emotions that they perceived might not cast themselves in a positive organizational light. The intentional choice of selecting a confidant made vulnerability with coworkers rational, even when bereaved employees' expressed *emotions at work* were taboo, unflattering, or organizationally contemptuous.

Work-Life Integration

Existing literature on work-life relationships and stress pits the conflict it creates against the ways that it can benefit individuals. This research indicated that Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) integrative theory of work-family enrichment has value for understanding bereaved employees experience of loss while at work. More specifically work-family enrichment posits that resources in one role or relationship can benefit those in another. In order to better theorize about work-life relationships, the goal of this research was to understand the processes that enhance the positive and sustain or foster

the negative aspects of merging work-life roles. Work-life integration suggests the resources at home and work have the ability to both help and hinder bereaved employees' roles and responsibilities in the alternative realm. Moreover, work-life integration recasts work-life conflict and work-life balance through the lens of stress. Relationships and resources both at home and work have the ability to simultaneously increase and assuage work-life stress. The following section further elucidates a proposed model of work-life integration for bereaved employees (see Figure 1).

Organizational Relationships

This research proposed that relationships at work have the ability to support bereaved employees in many ways. Through relationships at work bereaved employees may be emotionally supported, instrumentally supported, and informationally supported. Further, coworkers negotiate this support through acknowledgement, open door policy, and appraisal support. Effective communicatively supportive messages resulted in bereaved employees' reduction in work-life stress. Effective coworker support also has the proficiency to mitigate negative outcomes of limited resources and demanding roles and relationships at home. Specifically, effective forms of support may assuage work-life stress created through the physical and emotional demands home/family relationships encumber bereaved employees with while at work.

Coworker relationships also have the capacity to negatively support bereaved employees. This research specified that ineffective support resulted in coworkers communicating a perceived lack of empathy, business only, and assumed ineptitude. Converse to effective coworker support, ineffective supportive messages resulted in

bereaved employees describing increased work-life stress. Unhelpful coworker messages have the ability to heighten negative outcomes of limited resources and demanding roles and relationships at home. Ineffective support from coworkers, either well-meant or purposefully self-centered, may aggravate work-life stress created through the physical and emotional demands home/family relationships place on bereaved employees while at work.

Organizational Resources

Plentiful resources generated at work have the capability to help bereaved employees' management of work-life stress following the loss of a loved one. This research indicated that organizational resources such as work-leave policies and non-official work assistance promoted healthier bereaved employee well-being. Beneficial organizational resources have the ability to mitigate negative outcomes that demanding roles and relationships at home place on bereaved employees. Work-leave policies and non-official work assistance may ease work-life stress created through the physical and emotional demands home/family relationships place on bereaved employees.

Limited resources generated at work have the capacity to hinder bereaved employees' management of work-life stress following the loss of a loved one. This research argued that limited organizational resources such as limited leave policy and limited leave knowledge prompted less healthy environments for bereaved employees. Limited organizational resources have the power to heighten negative outcomes that demanding roles and relationships at home place on bereaved employees. Limited leave policy and limited leave knowledge may exacerbate work-life stress created through the

physical and emotional demands home/family relationships place on bereaved employees.

Home Relationships

Cohabitant relationships have the facility to positively support bereaved employees. This research suggested that cohabitant relationships may aid bereaved employees through emotional support, instrumental support, informational support and appraisal support. Effective communicatively supportive messages resulted in bereaved employees' describing reduced work-life stress. Effective cohabitant support may have the ability to mitigate negative outcomes of ineffective coworker support and limited resources. This research revealed that effective forms of support may lessen work-life stress created through limited leave policy and limited leave knowledge experienced at work and through workplace relationships.

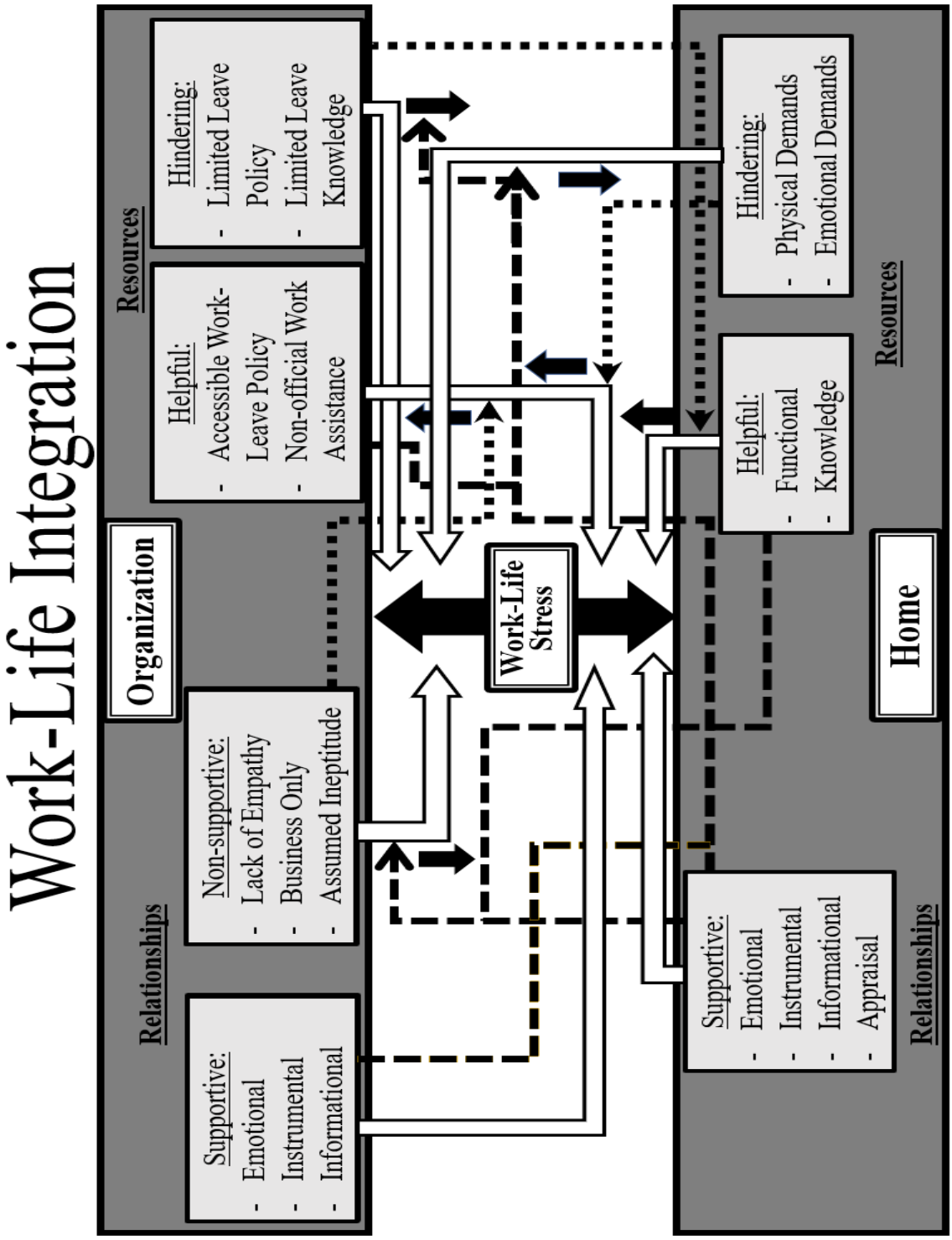
Home Resources

Beneficial resources generated at home have the capability help bereaved employees manage work-life stress following the loss of a loved one. This research argued that functional resources and knowledge resources promoted a healthier bereaved employee well-being. Beneficial cohabitant resources have the power to mitigate negative outcomes demanding roles and relationships at work place on bereaved employees. Additionally, providing functional and knowledge resources through cohabitant relationships may ease bereaved employees' work-life stress fostered through ineffective coworker support, limited leave policy, and limited leave knowledge.

Cohabitant demands generated at work have the capacity to hinder bereaved employees' management of work-life stress following the loss of a loved one. This research designated that physical and emotional demands by cohabitants prompted less healthy work environments for bereaved employees. Numerous cohabitant demands have the power to heighten negative outcomes demanding roles and relationships at work place on bereaved employees. Physical and emotional demands from home may worsen bereaved employees' work-life stress created through ineffective coworker support, limited leave policy, and limited leave knowledge.

Figure 1.

Work-Life Integration



Practical Implications

The results of this research have numerous practical implications for society. Given that the majority of people will: lose a loved one while at work, be a coworker with someone who has lost a significant relationship in their life, live with someone who goes back to work after the loss of a loved one, and run organizations with bereaved employees, the practical application of this research has exponential value. The following section further explicates the proposed ways that the findings of this research can better aid bereaved employees, cohabitants of bereaved employees, coworkers of bereaved employees, and organizations.

Bereaved Employees

The primary focus of this research was on the bereaved employee and their communicative interactions at home and at work following the loss of a loved one. For this reason, the most salient findings suggested practical implications for bereaved employees. Their relationships with coworkers, family and friends, and macro organizational decision makers can benefit from the implications described by the data found in interviews with bereaved employees.

Personal Advocacy

One of the most important ways bereaved employees can improve their position and experience at work is to be their own advocate. Even though bereaved employees are often distracted by numerous grief emotions, family demands, and personal logistical accommodations faced in the wake of the loss of a loved one, bereaved employees still need to be functional at work. In order to more effectively navigate the work-life

challenges brought on by loss, this research suggested that bereaved employees can take organizational action into their own hands. One of the more shocking findings of this research was that some bereaved employees are unaware of the specifics of their bereavement leave policies. Additionally, bereaved employees may not directly ask Human Resources to find out about their organizational bereavement policies. Bereaved employees sometimes just assumed there was no policy that could assist them or they referred to a coworker without asking anyone in management or Human Resources.

This research suggested that one of the first things a bereaved employee needs to do after the death of a loved one, if they are not already aware, is to find out what kind of bereavement leave options their organization provides. Questions that need to be answered are: Does the organization provide paid leave? If so, how many days? If not, how many unpaid days leave are allotted? How many sick days has the bereaved employee accumulated? How many personal leave days do bereaved employees have available to take off? Can parts of the workday be done remotely, at least temporarily? This research was clear that when employees knew more about their leave policies, they had benefited from clearer organizational experiences negotiating their work-life stresses and obligations post bereavement. Further, if bereaved employees do have paid days of bereavement leave, they should use all of them. Every single participant noted needing and wanting more days of bereavement leave when reflecting back on their experiences returning to work after their loss. This was true even when the bereaved employees in this research had positive experiences with their organization post bereavement. Those

participants that did not use all their days off regretted that choice and wished they had taken all their leave available at that time.

Outside of organizational policy and procedure related to bereavement leave, bereaved employees need to be advocates for their mental health and physical health. Part of this is knowing what their organization and health insurance offer in terms of clinical aid. Outside of clinical and medical aid, this research suggests that bereaved employees can make simple everyday work choices that benefit their management of work-life stress following loss. Numerous employees recalled taking time outside of the office to process their work day or grief related emotions that they were experiencing while at work. Finding a time in the work day to be alone, and process grief emotions, could be a valuable action bereaved employees take in order to aid their embodied loss at work.

One of the most overt findings this research described was that bereaved employees *do* experience grief emotions at work. Whether or not those emotions are expressed privately, publicly, or with one coworker, it is necessary for bereaved employees to account for the fact that they *will* process those emotions during their work day. Participants noted that having a confidant at work was a coworker relationship that they felt comfortable disclosing information related to the loss with and one that helped them deal with the emotional burden of loss while at work. Obviously not everyone at work fits this description, however, appraising those relationships that might and taking note of those coworkers that make themselves available can be advantageous for bereaved employees. This research also suggested that those confidant relationships may

not always be the coworkers bereaved employees were closest with prior to the loss. Therefore, being open to support from varied coworkers may prove fruitful.

This research also suggested that the ability to work remotely was advantageous for bereaved employees managing the numerous relational challenges faced at home, as well as the logistical challenges of death. Numerous participants noted the benefit of remote work options following their loss, particularly in the immediate weeks following the death, in order to handle funeral planning. Bereaved employees can benefit finding out: a) if their organization allows them to work remotely, b) if so, how many days or hours of the week may be accomplished remotely, and c) negotiating that work schedule with management.

Cohabitant/Family Relationships

Information described by this research can benefit bereaved employees' boundaries on their communication with family and loved ones while at work following loss. This research indicated that bereaved employees and their coworkers recalled frustration bereaved employees had with relationships from home impacting their day at work. Cohabitants and family members emotionally and physically distracted them from work through phone calls or constant texting. Of course, the constant availability cell phones and technology enable creates a challenge for all workers attempting to distance themselves from home relationships while at work. However, in order to more effectively manage their availability at work, bereaved employees should communicate clear boundaries they need while at work. They should have conversations with family that explicate when family members can and cannot call or text, and topic areas they can and

cannot communicate about based on immediacy at home. Certain issue may be ones that bereaved employees want to be interrupted by at work, such as an emergency with a caregiver, versus family members calling seeking emotional support because they were going through the belongings of the loved one who passed away. These types of conversations not only minimize distractions from home at work, but also result in an awareness of cohabitants and family members of the stress that the bereaved employee is experiencing. Acknowledging bereaved employees' work-life stress can foster more competent communicative interactions from personal relationships with bereaved employees.

Another area that the bereaved employee and cohabitant/family relationship could benefit from when considering the findings of this research is the discussion of household chores. Numerous bereaved employee participants noted the value garnered when cohabitants cleaned the home or cooked, or completed some task (i.e. walking the dog) that the bereaved employee was normally responsible. This research does not mean that a bereaved employee should be expected to stop all work at home, but that they can have an honest conversation with those they cohabitate about the temporal needs they have at home regarding household tasks in the wake of a loss. This conversation could highlight areas that they think they will need help managing and then negotiate the ways that these areas can be accomplished. Further, these are conversations that can be renegotiated as time passes and needs of all members of the household change.

Coworker Relationships

This research explicated rich data about bereaved employee interactions, support, and frustrations following the loss of a loved one while at work with coworkers. Depending on if the coworker was a subordinate or manager of the bereaved employee, practical implications are represented in this research. After the loss of a loved one, coworkers often did not know what bereaved employees needed from work and from their social support. Since that is not always clearly communicated, this research suggests that bereaved employees can be proactive about their needs with coworkers. This is particularly true when it revolves around work matters. This research revealed that bereaved employees can benefit, especially initially after loss, from coworkers' assistance on projects and when coworkers helped minimize their workload. Therefore, bereaved employees should be direct with their coworkers about what they need help with and those aspects of work that they do not need help. This would let managers know how they can provide more support if possible.

In light of this research, management could determine if bereaved employees could work remotely, add coworkers to assist bereaved employee responsibilities temporarily, and/or clarify expectations during this transitional space. Outside of management, coworkers would benefit from transparent and evolving discussions of bereaved coworker needs so coworkers would know how they could help and in ways that were appropriate immediately following loss and weeks to months later. If the bereaved employee is in a managerial position, they could benefit by allowing subordinates to take on more responsibility during that time and/or express to other

managers some of the challenges they are facing. These conversations could lead to valuable support from other managers that aid bereaved employees' management of their staff/subordinates.

Organizations

Although this research did not directly interact with the organizations of bereaved employees, besides interviewing a coworker of the bereaved employee's choice, it nevertheless has implications for organizations. Research has shown that the hidden cost of grief costs organizations billions of dollars each year (James & Friedman, 2003). Therefore, outside of providing employees healthier work-life accommodations, there are financial incentives for organizations to employ better bereavement policies. It would be simple to tell organizations that bereaved employees need more time off after work, however achieving that goal is unrealistic. This research more directly shed light on the benefits of transparency between the organization and bereaved employee.

First, after an organizational manager or Human Resources agent finds out a person has lost a loved one, they need to directly inform that bereaved employee of the organization's bereavement policies and procedures. This results in the bereaved employee having all the information regarding bereavement leave immediately. Bereaved participants in this research revealed that they did not adequately seek out information regarding bereavement leave. Consequently, when an organization immediately supplies this to a recently bereaved employee, that organization mitigates any apprehension or confusion bereaved employees might have finding this leave information.

Second, organizations should provide bereaved employees with all the options they have associated with leave (bereavement, sick, and personal days included). Many participants in this research noted confusion over their ability to utilize different leave options outside of their allotted bereavement leave. That confusion resulted in bereaved employees not fulling taking advantage of all the leave options available. When organizations directly articulate all available leave options, they will immediately assist bereaved employees' understanding of the relevant options they have, such as paid or non-paid.

Third, organizations must overtly encourage bereaved employees to utilize their available bereavement leave options. This research indicated that some bereaved employees felt pressure to not use their leave and/or felt judgement for the amount of leave they took. Unfortunately, those participants who did not use all their available bereavement leave options regretted that decision. If a general organizational norm was established that management outwardly encouraged bereaved employees to use all the bereavement leave allotted, then guilt or insecurity over the use of that leave would be mitigated for bereaved employees. This norm could be established directly through Human Resource conversations with bereaved employees, management insisting bereaved employees take all their time off, and macro-organizational communication about bereavement leave framed positively and not a hinderance to organizational productivity.

Cohabitant

This research indicated that cohabitants, which may be family or friends, play a significant role in bereaved employees' ability to navigate return to work following the loss of a loved one. Cohabitants of bereaved employees can provide support for work-life stress by assisting or taking over household obligations. Both bereaved employees and cohabitants noted the value in taking over household tasks that were normally completed by the bereaved employee. These tasks include: providing meals, bringing and picking up children from school and extracurricular activities, help providing care to elderly parents, cleaning the kitchen or bathrooms, and/or doing yardwork. In some instances, bereaved employees might actually have conversations about what they need around the house. However, it is more likely that those desires are insinuated, implied in a round-about way, hinted at nonverbally, or secretly wished. This research indicates that cohabitants can provide more support for bereaved employees by directly verbally asking them what household management needs they require. Taking initiative without asking can be valuable for the relationship, but by overtly asking, the cohabitant is more likely to know what specifically the bereaved employee wants help with and what they do not want help or advice regarding. Further, cohabitants may have to accept that their support may go seemingly unnoticed or acknowledged. They may need to reframe this lack of gratitude as circumstantial and not personal. It is very likely that the bereaved employee might be emotionally wrought with grief and other family concerns that the extra support received at home may go unacknowledged verbally, but nonetheless valued.

Although much of the support that a cohabitant can provide is household specific, they also may be able to provide support for work-related tasks. This research indicated that bereaved employees did use their cohabitant relationships to assist them in the completion of work. This does not mean that cohabitants should automatically do the work of a bereaved employee. However, if cohabitants possess some skill or knowledge that may aid bereaved employees' completion of work-related tasks, providing that skill or knowledge might be of great value to the bereaved employee struggling to manage their workload. This relationship may also serve as a sounding board to reassure the bereaved employee that they are doing a good job and in instances where they are extremely self-critical, provide appraisal support to reframe the way they are evaluating themselves as a bereaved employee.

Another important practical implication of this research for cohabitants, particularly if they are also grieving the same loss, is to create communicative boundaries. This implication is true of bereaved employees, but it also rings true of cohabitants/family members. A beneficial choice on the part of cohabitants/family members is to refrain from overly communicating via phone calls or texts with bereaved employees while at work. More specifically to not incite anger with them at work and evoke emotional responses. There will likely be conversations that will incite anger and emotional responses, but if cohabitants refrain from engaging those during bereaved employee work hours, they will likely foster a more effective and appropriate environment to have those discussions. This may limit some of the emotional burden

bereaved employees are already experiencing at work and yield a less combative relationship at home.

Coworker

This research indicated that the coworker relationship had the distinct ability to provide support for bereaved employees in a number of different ways and under different settings. One of the most overt practical implications from this research is that coworkers *should* acknowledge the loss the bereaved employee experienced. The choice of how to acknowledge this loss can be communicated in numerous forms and depend on the closeness of the relationship. Even though condolence cards and flowers are a routine ritual of coworkers following loss they are nevertheless effective. Bereaved participants noted the value they gained from those coworkers they did not know well sending cards or flowers after their loved one died. Moreover, condolence cards or flowers are likely not enough if the coworker and bereaved employee have a relationship that involves regular interaction. Participants continuously argued that one of the most unsupportive messages that a coworker could communicate was lack of acknowledgement of their loss. This was even more pronounced when the coworker was someone that had regular interactions with the bereaved employee. This does not mean all coworkers should bombard bereaved employees with condolences all the time and in all work settings, but depending on the relationship a simple verbal statement of sympathy is helpful. When acknowledging the loss, coworkers should refrain from: placated responses, comparing the loss to one they have experienced, and drawing attention to the loss in a public

meeting or group setting that forces attention to the bereaved employee when they may not be prepared to discuss their loss publicly with so many coworkers.

Coworkers that have a qualitatively closer relationship to the bereaved employee should expect to have more nuanced conversations about the loss and the bereaved employees' grief experience. An important caveat to this expectation is that time and place matter. Bereaved participants indicated that they provided more self-disclosure to those coworkers they viewed as confidants. Therefore, coworkers with close relationships to bereaved employees should be interested in the loss without prying, should be open to talk about what the bereaved coworker is comfortable talking about, should refrain from giving advice unless asked, and should assume that support is likely to occur more than just in the confines of the organizational walls. This research revealed numerous supportive ways that coworkers provided bereaved employees with emotional support on walks, at a restaurant or bar, or via phone conversations or texts after hours. Each bereaved employee is going to have varied needs and relational demands following loss. Therefore, the most important advice this research can provide coworkers is to be open and available to the bereaved employee's needs, as those needs are communicated overtly or subtly at work.

A significant finding of this research was that bereaved employees want to do their job, but also appreciate when coworkers help them with their work following loss. Coworkers should not assume that after a death a bereaved employee is incapable of handling stressful work-related decisions or jobs merely because they have just lost a loved one. Although they likely have additional challenges completing work related

tasks, coworkers assuming this type of ineptitude is counterproductive and negatively supports bereaved employees. A more effective choice coworkers can make when attempting to support a bereaved employee is to ask what the bereaved employee needs and to reevaluate those conversations at different times after the coworker comes back to work. Participants noted that they were uncomfortable having work done for them too long after they returned to work because they believed it could negatively impact the way they were viewed at work, negatively impact the way they saw their own worker identity, and because many bereaved employees want to go back to work to find some normalcy. Instead of assuming bereaved employees cannot handle their workload or want their workload limited, coworkers that have clear communication with bereaved employees regarding their organizational task needs will effectively provide agentic space for bereaved employees to dictate their own work-life path after the loss of a loved one.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

The focus of this research was to understand bereaved employees' return to work following the loss of a loved one by explicating how relationships at home and at work facilitated or hindered work-life integration. The qualitative research design, sampling method, interview process, and data analysis all revealed novel communicative information about social support for bereaved employees both at home and work. However, there were limitations to this research that could yield valuable understanding into phenomena experienced by bereaved employees, their cohabitants, and their coworkers after someone loses a loved one and returns to work. The following section

further delineates limitations in the participant population, organization type, and study design that could yield insight when addressed by future research.

Participant Limitations

Including three individuals for each group, bereaved employee, cohabitant, and coworker was a novel approach to investigating the intersections of work-life relationships following the loss of a loved one. However, this study ultimately only included 12 bereaved employees, which limited the array of possible experiences, contexts of death, and backgrounds. A notable limitation to the bereaved participants included in this research was that each of them were salaried employees and had some paid bereavement leave. Although not all of them actually knew at the time of the death that they had paid bereavement leave or the amount of days off, each bereaved participant had that option. Future research should focus on those employees that are not salaried and do not have paid bereavement leave. The majority of Americans are not salaried employees and therefore the option of paid bereavement leave is not a given. They might have to use sick days to take time off for bereavement, versus using sick days to supplement paid bereavement days off. The participants of this study did highlight their need for more time off, but generally they were more privileged than the typical hourly wage employee. Future research would benefit from focusing on non-salaried employees in order to more fully understand the array of challenges that a bereaved employee face outside of salaried employment. Non-salaried workers are typically less socio-economically advantaged and therefore having paid time off might be more potentially valuable, even though they are not often offered it by organizations. Less socio-

economically advantaged bereaved employees might also choose to work instead of taking unpaid bereavement leave, sick leave, or person days off because they financially need their hourly wages even in the midst of loss. These employees are likely to experience more pronounced work-life stress and have different needs than those of bereaved employees interviewed in this study.

Another limitation of the population in this study was the age and type of death of the deceased. The deceased individual was on average 72 years old and even though half of the deaths were sudden, the deaths were more expected than would be the deaths of middle-aged adults, young adults, teenagers, or children. Those types of deaths might result in more complicated grief and therefore result in different challenges for the bereaved employees at work and at home. For instance, the loss of a child is considered the most devastating loss a person can experience in life, therefore the grief emotions felt at work might be more complicated or debilitating than losing a grandparent. Further, none of the deaths were stigmatized deaths such as suicide or murder. Stigmatized deaths are significantly tabooer topics to openly discuss and therefore it is likely they would be brough up less or even acknowledged by coworkers. They might also be deaths where coworkers might not feel comfortable sending the minimal condolence card or flowers. Better understanding bereaved employees that suffered a stigmatized death would expand the nuanced ways those employees need support, the ways coworkers do negotiate support, and how coworkers fail to support bereaved employees who suffered a stigmatized loss.

A valuable part of this study was the inclusion of cohabitants to examine how relationships at home support or hinder bereaved employees' transition back to work after loss. However, many Americans do not have roommates. Subsequently, the numerous ways that cohabitants support bereaved employees at home would be erased. For example, they would not have someone at home to clean for them, make them dinner, wash clothes, or even vent to about work. Future research could illuminate the ways that individuals without cohabitants find support through their social network of relationships outside the home. This type of research would also indicate how technology might be present and utilized in bereaved employees' narratives of supportive relationships. Research could reveal how the use of computer mediated social support may serve to function similarly to face-to-face cohabitant support and potentially describe the ways that it functions differently. This type of research might also indicate the increased value supportive coworker relationships play for bereaved employees. Bereaved employees who live alone do not come home to any roommate, therefore coworker relationships are likely the primary daily interactants that bereaved employees communicate.

Organizational Limitations

Although this research included participants from a number of different fields, the general organizational structure was pretty traditional. Subsequently, all the organizations had traditional hierarchical structures with managers and subordinates, each organization was large or corporate, and all participants worked in organizations that had a physical workplace building. Future research could look at how bereaved employees at non-profit organizations are supported by their coworkers. Non-profit organizations typically have

less traditional hierarchical structuring and might create more avenues for social support from coworkers that are less encumbered by manager-subordinate relationships. This research pointed out numerous socially supportive ways that subordinates were assisted by their managers, perhaps with less hierarchical difference increased emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support might be communicated more regularly and less privately. This type of organization might also enable bereaved employees more agency to ask for aid or transparency to describe the ways in which they need support that a corporate office might discourage.

Another type of organization that was not included in this research was family run businesses. Family run businesses would be a fascinating site of study because likely the loss would directly impact many members of the organization. Therefore, support within that organization would be more complex and nuanced than in a traditional organization where likely no other employees would have a significant relationship to the deceased. Emotions at work might be more frequently communicated in a family business, which could result in more emotional support, but also could result in more physical and emotional work distractions and relational demands. These distractions might result in less productivity and could also foster frustration between family members. This dissertation highlighted the complicated ways that family members outside of the organization hinder bereaved employees' ability to productively function at work. When many members of the organization are connected to the loss and grieving at the same time, the potential for emotional demands is heightened and could foster increased problematic, volatile, or even hostile communication amongst family members at work.

Conversely, it may also be that due to familial relationships more healthy and open discussions might be had while at work that yield positive and healthy displays of social support. Further, the family run business might incorporate a specific cultural or religious background while at work and may also view death differently than the dominant American society. These types of businesses would be fruitful to study to assess cultural norms and different supportive behaviors communicated within organizational cocultures in the United States that could yield practical advice to the corporate world.

The physical workplace is one that is constantly changing. More and more organizations are foregoing large physical buildings that house all employees, in favor of smaller ones that house key departments and enable other employees to work remotely. This means that bereaved employees in these locations might never go into work or be around other coworkers after the loss of a loved one. The current study indicated that bereaved employees sought out work as a source of normalcy and disassociation from loss. Part of that disassociation came from leaving home and going to work. Bereaved employees that work remotely would no longer have the requirement that they must leave home to work. Future research would benefit from understanding how remote workers manage the bereavement process when they cannot use the physical work environment to disassociate from their grief. Additionally, bereaved employees that only work remotely have different ways of communicating in coworker relationships. Computer mediated communication would be more significantly used for coworker communication and likely more prominent as a channel of support for bereaved coworkers. Power distance is also lessened when communicating online and therefore breadth and depth of disclosures

might increase as well as the articulated needs that bereaved employees express to coworkers and managers. It might be more comfortable for bereaved employees to ask for aid on projects from other coworkers or even managers through mediated forms of communication such as email or text. Future research could account for the way CMC impacts how bereaved employees ask for aid. Working remotely would change the ways coworkers could support through nonverbal behaviors. For example, coworkers could not physically give the bereaved employee a hug when they first see her or him. The nuanced channels of support and hinderances to nonverbal support that manifest in computer mediated relationships are worth exploring due to the increase organizations with high numbers of remote workers.

Study Design Limitations

The research gathered in this dissertation had a strict stipulation on the time the interview took place with the bereaved employee, from when that bereaved employee's loved one passed away. Each bereaved participant had to have lost a loved one within the last 18 months prior to the interview taking place. This resulted in the interview with the bereaved employee taking place about 10 months after the loss. The choice to make the interviews take place within a year and a half was to ensure participants have vivid memories of their experiences returning to work. However, it also meant that participants had to recall interactions up to 18 months prior to the interview. This research was novel in its scope and design and therefore the interview timeframe was an expected limitation.

Future research could evaluate the needs of bereaved employees through different study designs that directly account for and focus on time since the loss took place. First,

participants could be recruited closer to their return to work, in order to provide a detailed picture of what returning to work is like for bereaved employees. Additionally, autoethnographic essays could provide vivid accounts of the emotional process of returning to work and more explicitly show how relationships at home and work support or complicate work-life integration. Second, participants could be recruited at different times after their return to work. For example, if bereaved participants were recruited at one, six, twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months after their loss, future research could compare the needs and challenges that those participants required across groups. Third, a longitudinal study could be conducted that included interviews with a bereaved employee, their cohabitant, and a coworker of their choosing across a given time period. For example, interviews could be conducted every three months and participants could be asked to keep a journal to better understand the ways in which bereaved employee needs evolve and relationships at home and work change over the course of loss.

This research solely focused on the trauma of loss. However, there are many different types of traumas that individuals suffer and then must return to work. For example, research could examine employees who return to work after experiencing: a natural disaster, rape or sexual assault, domestic violence, significant physical impairment (i.e. the loss of a limb, head injury, partial paralysis), or global pandemic. Future research into different types of trauma could assess the ways that coworker relationships support or hinder traumatized employees' navigation of work-life stress. Different traumas may share similar needs, but also may be characterized by different challenges at work and at home. Likely, a number of findings from this research will be

transferable to employees navigating trauma. However, each trauma is different, and identifying nuanced forms of communication is imperative to understanding effective supportive behaviors for employees at work following a traumatic experience. For example, a sexual assault survivor is unlikely to talk about that experience openly at work for many reasons, but is going to experience the emotional burden of the assault while at work. Future research could examine how potential work confidants do navigate discussions and support for employees that are victims of sexual assault, provide Human Resources with effective procedures when employees disclose that they were victims of sexual assault, and delineate how cohabitant relationships provide resources that assist victims' management of job-related tasks.

The findings of this research indicated that bereaved employees experienced a duality of competing desires. Future research may uncover ways that competing desires are present, blurred, or different in trauma survivors' narratives of their return to work after suffering a specific trauma. For example, if an employee goes back to work after her house has been damaged by an earthquake, she may experience similar competing desires found in this research. Subsequently, she may experience the competing desire of disassociation vs. association. She may want to use work as a way to disassociate from her anger over the fact that her house has foundation issues, water leaks, will be under construction for months, and that she has to live temporarily somewhere else. It may upset her when coworkers bring up the earthquake or bombard her with questions about her house when she wanted to use work as a means to disassociate with all those frustrations. However, she may simultaneously want to associate with the trauma at work

when she talks to coworkers about how she is feeling and the difficult choices she has to make repairing her house. She may feel frustrated when she believes she has to hide her emotions around coworkers about the earthquake and the ways it destroyed her house. Future research into various traumas employees suffer may shed light on a larger conceptual work-life framework of competing desires and the ways in which variations of those desires are exhibited in the aftermath of distinct traumas employees suffer.

This dissertation strove to understand complicated communicative questions regarding bereavement. Through an innovative qualitative interview design and specific data analysis steps, I was able to delineate answers to the research questions posed. While this dissertation does not have all the answers as to how coworkers or cohabitants can support bereaved employees, it does provide descriptive accounts of ways that those relationships both helped and hindered bereaved employees' management of work-life integration following loss. The novel aims of this research were successful and from this dissertation fruitful future research may be explored and uncovered.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

I am Gino Giannini, a doctoral candidate under the direction of Janet Alberts, Ph.D., in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University. We are conducting a research study on bereavement support in organizations.

We are looking for bereaved individuals who have returned to work after the loss of a loved one in the last year and a half to participate in an interview, as well as one member from their home/personal network and one coworker to participate in interviews. The primary bereaved individual's interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will take place at a location of the participant's choosing. The interviews with the personal/family member and coworker will last approximately 30 minutes and take place at a location of the participant's choosing. The interviews will be audio recorded, but all names will be changed and personal information will be kept confidential. You must be 18 years or older to participate.

If you are a bereaved individual interested in participating, but unsure of whom from your social network/family or coworker would also be willing to participate, we still encourage you to contact us about potentially participating. Additionally, if you know someone who may be interested or fit as a research participant for this study, please feel free to forward this email to them.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you or someone you know has had this experience, please contact us for more information. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Gino Giannini at ggiannin@asu.edu or at (209) 471-1204.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Gino Giannini, M.A.

Janet Alberts, Ph.D.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT (BEREAVED EMPLOYEE)

Title of research study: Support for Bereaved Employees STUDY00002931

Investigators: Dr. Janet Alberts and Gino Giannini (Co-Investigator)

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We invite you to take part in a research study because you have lost a loved one recently and returned to work following that loss. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this research.

Why is this research being done?

We are interested in better understanding the ways that individuals who have suffered loss can be best supported by their coworkers, organizations, and families after they return to work following the loss of a loved one. This is an experience that many people have, yet little research has been conducted on the ways that individuals in the bereaved person's personal and professional networks can provide effective support.

How long will the research last?

We expect that individuals will spend approximately 1 hour participating in the interview.

How many people will be studied?

We expect that between 45 and 60 people will participate in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

You will be interviewed by me and our interview will be recorded. I will also be making note of your reactions during the interview, such as emotional displays. All of the recorded information will be transcribed into text documents and then analyzed by me. This information will then be used in my dissertation and published research articles. You are free to decide whether you wish to participate in this study. Should you decide to participate in the study you will be asked to provide references for a coworker and a member of your family that might be interested in participating in an interview.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time without consequences to you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

This study seeks to protect participants at all times. Risks for participating in this study are minimal. One foreseeable risk is experiencing some emotional stress from discussing some of the aspects of your loss and how it has affected your social life or environment at home. A Post Interview Resource List will be available to you after the interview in case you would like to contact a professional to speak with you.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

We cannot promise any benefits to you from your taking part in this research. However, emotional or psychological benefits are possible. Discussing one's experiences with loss may provide emotional relief. Additionally, the information you provide may better help psychologists and therapists working with bereaved individuals as well as organizations supporting bereaved employees.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the University board that reviews research and Federal Agencies who want to make sure the researchers are doing their jobs correctly and protecting your individual rights.

In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Gino Giannini will secure your information. You will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name), and none of your information will be associated with your real name. Therefore, you will be anonymously quoted. All electronic files of observation notes and transcripts, as well as audio files will be kept in physically secured locations through the use of password protected files and locked drawers. After all audio files are transcribed, they will be destroyed. Any publications generated from this research will not include your real name or the names of anyone referenced.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, you may communicate with Gino Giannini by e-mail at ggiannin@asu.edu or by phone at (209) 471-1204. You may also contact Dr. Janet Alberts at jess.alberts@asu.edu

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT (COHABITANT)

Title of research study: Support for Bereaved Employees STUDY00002931

Investigators: Dr. Janet Alberts and Gino Giannini (Co-Investigator)

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We invite you to take part in a research study because you are personal friend or family member of an individual who has returned to work following the loss of their [your] loved one. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this research.

Why is this research being done?

We are interested in better understanding the ways that individuals who have suffered loss can be best supported by their coworkers, organizations, and families after they return to work following the loss of a loved one. This is an experience that many people have, yet little research has been conducted on the ways that individuals in the bereaved person's personal and professional networks can provide effective support.

How long will the research last?

We expect that individuals will spend approximately 30 minutes participating in the interview.

How many people will be studied?

We anticipate that between 45 and 60 people will participate in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

You will be interviewed by me and our interview will be recorded. I will also be making note of your reactions during the interview, such as emotional displays. All of the recorded information will be transcribed into text documents and then analyzed by me. This information will then be used in my dissertation and published research articles. You are free to decide whether you wish to participate in this study.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time without consequences to you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

This study seeks to protect participants at all times. Risks for participating in this study are minimal. One foreseeable risk is experiencing some emotional stress from discussing some of the aspects of your loss and how it has affected your social life or environment at home. A Post Interview Resource List will be available to you after the interview in case you would like to contact a professional to speak with you.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

We cannot promise any benefits to you from your taking part in this research. However, emotional or psychological benefits are possible. Discussing one's experiences with loss

may provide emotional relief. Additionally, the information you provide may better help psychologists and therapists working with bereaved individuals as well as organizations supporting bereaved employees.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the University board that reviews research and Federal Agencies who want to make sure the researchers are doing their jobs correctly and protecting your individual rights.

In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Gino Giannini will secure your information. You will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name), and none of your information will be associated with your real name. Therefore, you will be anonymously quoted. All electronic files of observation notes and transcripts, as well as audio files will be kept in physically secured locations through the use of password protected files and locked drawers. After all audio files are transcribed, they will be destroyed. Any publications generated from this research will not include your real name or the names of anyone referenced.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, you may communicate with Gino Giannini by e-mail at ggiannin@asu.edu or by phone at (209) 471-1204. You may also contact Dr. Janet Alberts at jess.alberts@asu.edu

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT (COWORKER)

Title of research study: Support for Bereaved Employees STUDY00002931

Investigators: Dr. Janet Alberts and Gino Giannini (Co-Investigator)

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We invite you to take part in a research study because you are a coworker of an individual who has returned to work following the loss of their loved one. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this research.

Why is this research being done?

We are interested in better understanding the ways that individuals who have suffered loss can be best supported by their coworkers, organizations, and families after they return to work following the loss of a loved one. This is an experience that many people have, yet little research has been conducted on the ways that individuals in the bereaved person's personal and professional networks can provide effective support.

How long will the research last?

We expect that individuals will spend approximately 30 minutes participating in the interview.

How many people will be studied?

We anticipate that between 45 and 60 people will participate in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

You will be interviewed by me and our interview will be recorded. I will also be making note of your reactions during the interview, such as emotional displays. All of the recorded information will be transcribed into text documents and then analyzed by me. This information will then be used in my dissertation and published research articles. You are free to decide whether you wish to participate in this study.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time without consequences to you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

This study seeks to protect participants at all times. Risks for participating in this study are minimal. One foreseeable risk is experiencing some emotional stress from discussing some of the aspects of your loss and how it has affected your social life or environment at home. A Post Interview Resource List will be available to you after the interview in case you would like to contact a professional to speak with you.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

We cannot promise any benefits to you from your taking part in this research. However, emotional or psychological benefits are possible. Discussing one's experiences with loss

may provide emotional relief. Additionally, the information you provide may better help psychologists and therapists working with bereaved individuals as well as organizations supporting bereaved employees.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the University board that reviews research and Federal Agencies who want to make sure the researchers are doing their jobs correctly and protecting your individual rights.

In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Gino Giannini will secure your information. You will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name), and none of your information will be associated with your real name. Therefore, you will be anonymously quoted. All electronic files of observation notes and transcripts, as well as audio files will be kept in physically secured locations through the use of password protected files and locked drawers. After all audio files are transcribed, they will be destroyed. Any publications generated from this research will not include your real name or the names of anyone referenced.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, you may communicate with Gino Giannini by e-mail at ggiannin@asu.edu or by phone at (209) 471-1204. You may also contact Dr. Janet Alberts at jess.alberts@asu.edu

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE (BEREAVED EMPLOYEE)

INTRO PROMPT: Hello and thank you for agreeing to interview with me. Today we will be talking about your experience returning to work after the loss of your [loved one]. I am interested in this topic because it is an experience that almost everyone goes through, yet there is little research about the experiences of and support for bereaved employees. Today I will be asking you a number of questions related to your loss, your return to work, and your relationships at work and at home following the loss. The interview should take approximately one hour to complete.

I will be audio recording our conversation so that I can transcribe it later. Please read and sign this informed consent form to give me permission to audio record our talk. (Hand out Informed Consent Forms and explain.) Remember that your participation is voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation at any time. If I ask a question that you don't want to answer, you don't have to. If you feel the need to pause or take a break, that is perfectly fine. Also, this interview may bring up some emotions and that is also normal and natural. I have conducted many interviews with people who have suffered trauma as children as well as with couples who have lost a child. Therefore, I am experienced with the sensitive nature of the conversation we will be having today. Do you have any questions for me at this time?

Prompt: First I would like to begin with some questions about your background.

A. Background and Work History (gaining general information and developing rapport)

1. Where were you employed at the time of your loss? What was your position at that time? Are you still employed there? Are you in the same position? (experience question)
2. How would you describe your work environment to someone who didn't know anything about it?
3. Can you tell me about your relationship with the person you lost? (experience question)

   Probe: How did they die?

   How long ago did the death occur?

   How long after the loss did you return to work?
4. Can you explain the type of bereavement leave you were offered and/or took following your loss? (factual issues)

   (If not answered) Probe: How many days did you take off? Were you paid? How was this negotiated with your boss/organization?

   Prompt: The next set of questions address your feelings and your experience of being at work while managing your grief after your loss.

B. Emotions and Experience with Grief at work:

5. Can you describe your general feelings about work and work-related tasks once you returned to work after your loss? (tour questions)
6. Did you notice any changes in the way you worked? If yes -What types of changes occurred? If no –Why do you think the way you worked stayed the same? Probe: How long did this last? Is this still happening?

Probe: Did any of your relationships with coworkers change after you returned to work? If so, why do think this occurred?

Can you tell me a story of how a relationship changed?

7. Did you experience any emotions related to your loss while at work?

   Probe: Did these emotions arise when you were alone? How did you express your emotion(s)?

Prompt: Now I would like to ask some questions regarding your experience of returning to work following the loss of your loved one.

C. Returning to Work Following Death

8. Can you describe your experience of your first day returning to work following your loss? (tour question)

   Probe: How would you describe your demeanor?

   Did you initiate conversation with coworkers about your loss?

   How did people respond to you? How did coworkers respond to you? How did your manager(s) respond to you?

   Did you notice changes in your coworkers' behavior towards you? If yes, can you give me an example? (tour question)

   If there were changes, how long did these changes last?

9. After that first day back did you talk about your loss with other employees? (closed ended question)

   Probe: If so, how often?

   Can you tell me a story of a time this happened?

How did you feel when this happened?

Did you ever feel that others did not want you to talk about the challenges/grief you were experiencing? If so, could you give me an example of time when that happened?

10. Have you experienced any challenges with your work due to your grief over your loss?

    Probe: If so, have you discussed some of these challenges with other employees? (closed ended question)

    Can you tell me a story of a time this happened? How recently did this occur?

    How do you feel when this happens?

    Do you feel that others do not want you to talk about the challenges/grief you are experiencing? If so, could you give me an example of time when that happened?

11. Since returning to work, in what ways has your organization supported you?

    Probe: What actions were taken by your employers to acknowledge your loss?

    What actions were taken by your employers that assisted you on the job?

    What actions were taken that you found to be helpful? What was done that you found to be hurtful?

12. What did your colleagues do to assist you at work following your loss? Which of their behaviors were most helpful? Why were these behaviors so helpful?

13. Conversely, what did people do that you found to be unhelpful? Did anyone do anything that you perceived as hurtful?

14. Looking back now, how do you wish your organization had treated you upon your return to work? (posing the ideal)

Prompt: The next set of questions concern your relationships at home.

D. Relationships at home

15. After your loss, how if at all, have you perceived that your role/responsibilities at work have hurt your home life?
16. Probe: Can you provide an example?
17. After your loss, how if at all, have you perceived that your role/responsibilities at work have helped your home life?

    Probe: Can you provide an example?
18. Research indicates that sometimes individuals use work as a distraction from home life or a way to keep busy following loss. How, if at all, have you experienced this?
19. How, if at all, have you perceived that your role/responsibilities at home hurt you at work following your loss? If so, can you provide an example?
20. How, if at all, have you perceived that your role/responsibilities at home helped you at work following your loss? If so, can you provide an example?
21. In what ways have your family members helped you deal with the challenges of working while experiencing grief?

    Probe: Can you tell me a story about this?
22. In what ways have your friends helped you deal with the challenges of working while experiencing grief?

    Probe: Can you tell me a story about this.

E. Conclusion and Wrap-up Questions

23. Thinking about all that we have discussed, is there anything that I have not asked you that you believe I should have?

I just have a few technical questions to ask you.

24. What would you like your pseudonym to be?

25. What is your age?

26. How do you identify your ethnic or racial background?

27. Finally, do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW GUIDE (COHABITANT)

INTRO PROMPT: Hello and thank you for agreeing to interview with me. Today we will be talking about your experience interacting with [bereaved coworker] after the loss of their or your [loved one]. I am interested in this topic because it is an experience that almost everyone goes through, yet there is also very little research about the experiences of and support for bereaved employees. Today I will be asking you a number of questions related to their return to work and your experience at home with them following the loss. The interview should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

I will be audio recording our conversation so that I can transcribe it later. Please read and sign this informed consent form to give me permission to audio record our talk. (Hand out Informed Consent Forms and explain.) Remember that your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time. If I ask a question that you don't want to answer you don't have to. If you feel the need to pause or take a break that is perfectly fine. Do you have any questions for me at this time?

Prompt: First I would like to begin with some questions about your background.

A. Background and Work History (gaining general information and developing rapport)

1. What was your relationship to the deceased?
2. What is your relationship to [bereaved individual]?
3. Can you tell me about your relationship to [bereaved individual]?

Prompt: Now I would like to ask some questions regarding your experiences with them following their return to work after the loss of their loved one.

B. Returning to Work Following Death

4. Do you remember the first day [bereaved individual] returned to work following the loss? If not, what about the first week?

   Probe: Can you describe your experience interacting with them that first day? Or week?

   How did they describe their experience going back to work?

5. Did [bereaved individual] talk about the reactions employees had to them upon their return? For example?

   Probe: Did [bereaved individual] mention that anyone at work changed their behavior toward [bereaved individual]?

6. In general, what do you believe have been the most supportive actions coworkers took to help [bereaved individual] manage work after the loss?
7. What do you believe were the lease supportive actions coworkers took during this time?

Prompt: Now I am going to ask you about their emotional responses following their return to work.

C. Emotions and Experience with Grief at work:

8. How would you describe [bereaved individual's] general feelings about work, once they returned to work after the loss? (tour question)
9. In what ways, if at all, did you notice changes in [bereaved individual's] actions regarding work?

   Probe: How long did this last? Is this currently happening?

10. Did [bereaved individual] ever talk to you about experiencing grief over the loss while at work? If so, what did they say?

    Probe: Did they ever mention discussing their grief with coworkers? If so, could you tell me what [bereaved individual] told you? If so, could you tell me what your family member said?

Prompt: The next set of questions address your relationship to [bereaved individual] following the loss. add

D. Relationships at home

11. In what ways have noticed changes in [bereaved individual's] relationships at home following the loss? For example?

    Probe: What specifically has changed about your relationship to [bereaved individual]? For example?

12. Have you noticed yourself make any behavioral changes in order to support [bereaved individual] following the loss? If so, in what ways?

13. How, if at all, have you noticed [bereaved individual's] return to work create challenges at home following the loss? Can you tell me a story of a time this happened?

    Probe: Since their return to work, have you noticed any changes in their behaviors at home?

    How, if at all, have you noticed any benefits for [bereaved individual] since returning to work?

14. Since [bereaved individual's] return to work, have you done anything differently in order to help them manage their daily life at home? If so, in what ways?
15. How, if at all, have you helped them cope with their responsibilities at work? For example?

E. Conclusion and Wrap-Up

16. Thinking about all that we have discussed, is there anything that I have not asked you that you believe I should have?

I just have a few technical questions to ask you.

17. What would you like your pseudonym to be?
18. What is your age?
19. How do you identify your ethnic or racial background?
20. Finally, do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW GUIDE (COWORKER)

INTRO PROMPT: Hello and thank you for agreeing to interview with me. Today we will be talking about your experience interacting with [bereaved coworker] after the loss of their [loved one]. I am interested in this topic because it is an experience that almost everyone goes through, yet there is also very little research about the experiences of and support for bereaved employees. Today I will be asking you a number of questions related to their return to work and your relationship following the loss. The interview should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

I will be audio recording our conversation so that I can transcribe it later. Please read and sign this informed consent form to give me permission to audio record our talk. (Hand out Informed Consent Forms and explain.) Remember that your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time. If I ask a question that you don't want to answer you don't have to. If you feel the need to pause or take a break that is perfectly fine. Do you have any questions for us at this time?

Prompt: First I would like to begin with some questions about your background.

A. Background and Work History (gaining general information and developing rapport)

1. Where were you employed at the time of [bereaved individual] loss? What was your position at that time? Are you still employed there? Are you in the same position? (experience question)
2. Can you tell me about your relationship to [bereaved individual]?

   Probe: How long have you known [bereaved individual] and/or worked with them?

Prompt: Now I would like to ask some questions regarding your experiences with [bereaved individual] following their return to work after the loss of their loved one.

B. Returning to Work Following Death

3. Do you remember the first day [bereaved individual] returned to work following the loss? If not, do you remember anything from the first week?

   Probe: Can you describe your experience interacting with them that first day? (Or week)

   What were people's general reactions to them?

   Did you notice any changes in their actions toward you? For example? (tour question)

   If there were changes, how long did these changes last?

4. In what ways, if at all, did you talk about the loss of [bereaved individual's] loved one at work?

   Probe: Can you tell me a specific story of when this occurred?

5. In what ways, if at all, did you notice coworkers bring up [bereaved individual's] loss?

   Probe: How did you notice [bereaved individual] respond to coworkers mentioning their loss? How if they did not?

6. How did you notice your organization support [bereaved individual] following the loss?

   Probe: Did you notice any accommodations they were given?

Did you notice any coworkers assist them with their job responsibilities? For example?

7. How if at all, did [bereaved individual] behave differently at work following their loss? For example?

   Probe: Did they ever discuss any frustrations with work after their return? Conversely, did they ever discuss their pleasure being at work after the loss?

8. How, if at all, did you witness [bereaved individual] experience grief over their loss at work?

   Did they approach you to talk about any of these emotions? For example?

9. What do you believe were the most supportive actions you took to help your [bereaved individual] manage work after the loss?

   Probe: Looking back, do you wish you had done anything different? For example? Looking back do you wish you had

10. How, if at all, do you believe your organization could have better supported [bereaved individual]?

C. Conclusion and Wrap-Up

11. Thinking about all that we have discussed, is there anything that I have not asked you that you believe I should have?

I just have a few technical questions to ask you.

12. What would you like your pseudonym to be?

13. What is your age?

14. How do you identify your ethnic or racial background?

15. Finally, do you have any questions for me?