INFLUENCES ON GRIEF AMONG PARENTALLY BEREAVED ADULTS

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The parent-child relationship is significant throughout the life course, although both positive and negative changes occur as children reach adulthood and develop an identity independent of their family of origin. Grief resulting from parental loss during this time may be a product of many variables including age, relationship quality, and sex roles. The current study examined several variables potentially influencing grief after the death of a parent. As part of a larger study, adults ($n = 180$) completed measures assessing parental involvement, personal grief and adjustment, as well as sex role preferences. The archival data were subjected to analyses of covariance, taking into account time since the death and children's sex role preferences (traditional or egalitarian). Female sex of the child was significant in predicting several aspects of grief, suggesting that women have a stronger emotional experience of grief. This may be a result of young women's stronger emotional bonds with parents when compared to men, feelings of exclusion from college peers during bereavement, or vulnerability for rumination. Sex role preferences were also influential in several aspects of grief. Sex of the parent was not significant, although the interaction for sex of the parent and sex of the child was, suggesting that for daughters, the loss of a mother may be particularly difficult. Results suggest that women may express more intense emotions as part of the grief process and maintain stronger bonds with the deceased, although this likely depends heavily on cultural, familial, and religious contexts, as well as cause of death.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Significance of the Parent-Child Relationship

Parent-child relationships are significant throughout life and critical in children's development (Thornton, Orbuch, & Axinn, 1995). For example, the parent-child bond plays an important role in children's psychological well-being (van Wel & Linssen, 2000), a trend that continues as children grow (Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992; Barnett, Kibria, Baruch, & Pleck, 1991; Knoester, 2003; van Wel & Linssen, 2000). Closer parent-child relationships are associated with less psychological distress (Barnett et al., 1991; Barnett et al., 1992), as well as increased self-esteem and well-being (Roberts & Bengtson, 1993). Family also plays a critical role in identity development (Schultz, 2007).

However, young adults (including traditional college students), are at a unique place in life that includes pursuing long-term intimate relationships, reevaluating relationships with parents, becoming more autonomous, establishing direction in life, and developing an identity (Balk & Vesta, 1998; Samuolis, Layburn, & Schiaffino, 2001; Schultz, 2007). During this process of separation-individuation, young adults "must attempt to disengage from, or to transcend, the internalized object representations formed in infancy and early childhood and establish a sense of self that is distinct and individuated" (Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989, p. 286). As they become more independent, children look less to parents for approval or self-esteem and instead look to themselves (Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989).

Relationships are generally positive as children progress through adolescence and young adulthood (van Wel & Linssen, 2000; Thornton, Orbuch & Axinn, 1995), as well as adulthood (Barnett et al., 1991; Barnett et al., 1992; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Umberson, 1992). However, relationships between parents and children often undergo both positive and negative

changes (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). As examples, Van Wel, Linssen, and Abma (2000) found a small but significant decline in relationships between adolescents ages 15-20 and their parents, while Thornton, Orbuch, and Axinn (1995), observed that relationships improved as children became young adults (ages 18-23), particularly between mothers and children. Thornton et al. (1995) noted that such closeness may be a result of more mutual understanding, affection, respect, etc., as children mature. Indeed, with the exception of the father-daughter dyad (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998), parental age seems to parallel relationship quality with adult children, confirming that these relationships likely strengthen over time (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Umberson, 1992).

Proulx and Helms (2008) found that as children moved into young adulthood, the most prominent changes in the parent-child relationship were closeness/openness between parent and child, amount of parent-child interaction, and the child's independence/maturity. Many parents reported that their role had transitioned into that of a peer or mentor as their child entered young adulthood (Proulx & Helms, 2008). According to Aquilino (1997), the young adult leaving home affected the parent-child relationship the most, resulting in such positive changes as less conflict, fewer power issues, and decreased parental authority. However, the intensity of the parent-child relationship lessened, as did emotional closeness and time spent together. Children leaving home also shows parents that their son or daughter is moving on; the relationship dynamic changes as parental expectations evolve and children become less dependent (Aquilino, 1997).

Indeed, parental support (advice, gifts, services, and child care) generally decreases as children grow into adulthood and throughout the life course, with some exceptions among college students (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1992). The probability that parents and children will

live together declines as both generations age, although coresidence occurs throughout life (White, 1994). Umberson (2006) noted that just over half (57% of men and 47% of women) of 18- to 24-year-olds in the United States lived with a parent in 2000. The percentage of young adult men living at home was somewhat similar (52%) in 1960, but numbers have increased dramatically for women, only 35% of whom lived at home fifty years ago. More daughters today pursue education and/or wait to get married (Umberson, 2006). In fact, about half of these young adults (both men and women) living at home are enrolled in college (White, 1994). Although the parent-child relationship generally remains positive during coresidence (Umberson, 2006), a young adult child living at home may lead to tension and parental dissatisfaction (Umberson, 1992).

Life Transitions during the Young Adult Years

Transitions to new roles as college students or full-time employees, particularly after leaving home, reflect that young adult children are becoming more independent. These changes encourage closeness in the parent-child relationship while decreasing conflict (Aquilino, 1997). Thornton et al. (1995) also found more respect, affection, confidence, understanding, and enjoyment within the parent-child relationship after children gained adult roles.

Nevertheless, as children grow, they "seem to be less involved with parents" (Umberson, 1992, p. 672). When young adults gain new roles and responsibilities outside the family of origin (e.g., marriage, parenthood, and full-time employment), parental relationships generally decrease in salience (Amato, 1994; Roberts & Bengtson, 1993; White, 1994). For example, the influence of the parent-child relationship on a child's well-being declines (Amato, 1994; Roberts & Bengtson, 1993). White (1994) also showed that once children earned a higher income, married, or became parents, they were much less likely to return home, particularly daughters.

However, there are exceptions to this trend (Thornton et al., 1995), and research shows discrepancies between daughters and sons as these transitions occur (Barnett et al., 1992; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). For example, the literature suggests that marital status plays an important role in parent-child relationship quality. Negative mother-daughter relationships did not affect adult daughters as strongly if the daughter was married, employed, or a parent (Barnett et al., 1991). Daughters were also more likely to describe a better relationship with parents after they were married themselves (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998).

Furthermore, these effects manifest differently between dyads. Mothers and daughters who shared the same marital status (i.e., widowed mothers and single daughters) reported closer relationships, whereas the opposite was true for father-daughter relationships (Barnett et al., 1991). Widowhood status, on the other hand, had no effect on the quality of married adult sons' relationships with their parents (Barnett et al., 1992). Similarly, when children maintained singlehood, mother-son relationships improved, while mother-daughter relationships showed both improvement and deterioration (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998).

In regards to employment, working longer hours meant improvement in father-son relationships but decline for fathers and daughters. Yet, fewer hours at work were more likely to lead to poorer mother-daughter relationships. Similar discrepancies arose as young adults became parents—having a child related to better mother-son relationships but decline in father-daughter relationships (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). Siblings played an important role in maintaining close parent-child relationships, as well (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998), particularly sisters (Barnett et al., 1992).

Differences between Mothers and Fathers in the Parent-Child Relationship

Research on parenting roles between mothers and fathers gives varied results. Some literature notes that the relationship with the mother is more salient or influential (Aquilino, 1997; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Thornton et al., 1995; Umberson, 1992), particularly among daughters (Barnett et al., 1991; Proulx & Helms, 2008). Other authors insist there may be little difference between the roles of mothers and fathers (Amato, 1994; Lamb & Lamb, 1976; Proulx & Helms, 2008; Wenk, Hardesty, Morgan, & Blair, 1994), or that the father-son relationship is particularly significant (Barnett et al., 1992; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Lamb & Lamb, 1976).

"The major theorists, their differences notwithstanding, are united on this one point: infants are assumed to have no significant relationships other than with their mothers" (Lamb & Lamb, 1976, p. 379). In fact, socialized gender differences seem to emphasize maternal relationships over paternal relationships at all ages (Umberson & Chen, 1994). Regardless of sex, both young adult and adult children have described closer relationships with mothers than fathers (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Thornton et al., 1995), and maternal relationships may be more influential on children's well-being (Umberson, 1992). Fathers, on the other hand, often spend less time with young adult children (Aquilino, 1997; Umberson, 1992) and are not as close (Aquilino, 1997).

Mother-daughter relationships may be particularly salient. Although both mother-daughter and father-daughter relationships affected a daughter's subjective well-being, depression, and anxiety, Barnett, Kibria, Baruch, and Pleck (1991) found that the daughter-mother relationship played a larger role. Additionally, Proulx and Helms (2008) showed that while communication decreased in most of the parent-child dyads over time, this was not the

case for mothers and daughters. Findings such as these insinuate that females emphasize relationships more than males and suggest that maternal relationships are more salient.

However, Lamb and Lamb's (1976) review concluded that despite differences in the relationship, (e.g., quality or interaction), fathers can play a uniquely important role in children's early development, particularly social and psychological development (Lamb & Lamb, 1976). Amato (1994) also found that the father-child relationship was significant overall; when both sons and daughters reported being closer to fathers, they expressed more satisfaction and happiness as well as less distress.

Additionally, changes in psychological well-being in both parents and children showed reciprocal effects within the parent-child relationship, with no indication that the connection is weaker for fathers (Knoester, 2003). Parents in the same family have reported similar experiences with their young adult child (Proulx & Helms, 2008), posing that mothers' and fathers' roles may be more similar than previously thought. Daughters (ages 25-55) and sons (ages 25-40) also described similar amounts of concerns and rewards between both parental relationships (Barnett et al., 1991; Barnett et al., 1992), suggesting that neither parent is closer or more important.

Some researchers have emphasized the importance or salience of paternal relationships with sons in particular (Barnett et al., 1992; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Lamb & Lamb, 1976), although differences are sometimes small. Kaufman and Uhlenberg (1998) found that father-son relationships were slightly closer than father-daughter relationships. Additionally, Barnett et al. (1992) noted that although relationships with both parents influenced sons' psychological distress (e.g., depression, anxiety), the father-son relationship was a more significant predictor.

Other research suggests that children depend more on their same-sex parent, and that boys are more vulnerable to detrimental effects of a father's absence than are girls (Lamb & Lamb, 1976).

Perhaps it is not that one parent is more important than the other, but that each parent has a different role. For example, fathers may be responsible for passing on their values and way of life to their children (Lamb & Lamb, 1976).

> The major implication…is that during the second year of life, fathers become particularly salient in the lives of their sons. Presumably, these father-son relationships facilitate the adoption of sex-appropriate behavior patterns by the boys, who are able to model, and are in addition given training by their fathers. (Lamb & Lamb, 1976, p. 382)

Other research, however, found no indication that the father-child relationship is more significant for sons than daughters, although the connection between psychological distress and the mother-son relationship was significant (Amato, 1994). Additionally, "Children's perceptions of their relationships with a mother and a father seem to be more salient in determining how the children feel about themselves and their lives than is the physical presence of the father" (Wenk, Hardesty, Morgan, & Blair, 1994, p. 234).

Differences between Sons and Daughters in the Parent-Child Relationship

As previously discussed, transitions to adult roles affected parental relationships between daughters and sons differently. However, sex differences are also present in other areas, particularly attachment (Proulx & Helms, 2008; Samuolis et al., 2001; Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994; van Wel & Linssen, 2000; Wenk et al., 1994). For example, parental attachment is significant in identity development among women and only a small or nonexistent consideration for men (Samuolis, Layburn, & Schiaffino, 2001; Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994). Adolescent and young adult daughters were also more sensitive to changes in parent-child relationship quality;

declines, in particular, led to more emotional difficulties and suicidal thoughts among daughters (van Wel & Linssen, 2000).

The parent-son relationship may simply be different rather than less significant. Proulx and Helms (2007) asserted that relationships similar to those of peers were more likely with daughters, while mentor relationships were more likely with sons. Indeed, Wenk et al. (1994) found that although both emotional and behavioral involvement from parents were important for boys and girls, behavioral involvement was much more significant for boys.

Death of a Parent during Young Adulthood

One in ten people will lose a parent before the age of 25 (Umberson, 2006), as the growth and transitions of young adulthood are occurring. According to Scharlach (1991), initial reactions to such a loss include difficulty interacting with others, losing interest in people or activities, feeling anger or abandonment, having trouble sleeping, or an inability to maintain normal or work activities. Residual grief reactions may consist of such behaviors as crying or becoming upset, missing the person, being preoccupied with (often painful) thoughts of the deceased, being reminded of them, or an inability to avoid thinking about them (Scharlach, 1991). Upon losing both of her parents only one year apart from each other, a grief counselor wrote:

> The emotions I experienced were intense and ranged from numbness to anger to sadness to relief—sometimes all within moments of each other. The full range of emotions left me confused and at times frightened. I thought there would never be an end to the internal chaos I lived in and wondered how I was functioning in the world around me. (Blevins, 2008, p. 90)

Balk (1997) distributed a survey to almost one thousand college students enrolled in a large state university. Results suggested that in the past year, 29% of students had lost a family member, while 27% had lost a friend. When considering the prior two years, almost 50% of students reported a family death, and 38% reported the death of a friend (Balk, 1997; Balk & Vesta, 1998).

Over 80% of respondents had discussed the loss with their mothers, while only 58.9% had spoken to their father, and 58.8% had talked to a close friend. Talking was beneficial for over 80% of students (Balk, 1997). Yet grieving students find very little acknowledgment, support, or understanding from the university community (Balk & Vesta, 1998) and may feel excluded (Balk & Vesta, 1998; Taub & Servaty-Seib, 2008). One college student grieving the death of her father felt detached from classmates and expressed that other students didn't understand; she observed that peers seemed uncomfortable and reluctant to discuss her loss (Balk & Vesta, 1998).

As previously discussed, there is a great deal of change and variability in the quality of the parent-child relationship over the life course, especially as children navigate early adulthood (Amato, 1994; Aquilino, 1997; Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1992; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Lapsley et al., 1989; Proulx & Helms, 2008; Roberts & Bengtson, 1993; Thornton et al., 1995; Umberson, 1992; van Wel & Linssen, 2000), and relationship quality likely affects grief. Whether relationships were positive or negative also impacts a child's grief response (Umberson & Chen, 1994).

The younger population also faces the death of a parent at a unique time of individual transitions and changes (Balk & Vesta, 1998; Lapsley et al., 1989; Samuolis et al., 2001) as young adults continue to develop their identity (Schultz, 2007). The death of a parent is more

than the loss of a family member; it is the loss of a mentor or peer (Proulx & Helms, 2008) during a time of personal growth and uncertainty.

Besides impacting social integration, Servaty-Seib and Hamilton (2006) noted that a death can have severe effects on a college student's academic performance, even leading to academic probation, dismissal or withdrawal. Their research showed that grieving students earned much lower grades than non-bereaved peers—a difference not seen the semester after the death—and emphasized the need to assist grieving students early and keep them on campus (Servaty-Seib & Hamilton, 2006).

Prior studies have examined grief after losing a parent, especially between age groups, but comparatively few studies have analyzed bereavement in young adults (Balk & Vesta, 1998; Lawrence, Jeglic, Matthews, & Pepper, 2005; Servaty-Seib & Hamilton, 2006; Taub & Servaty-Seib, 2008). Furthermore, with two exceptions (Balk & Vesta, 1998; Lawrence et al., 2005), these particular studies did not limit study participants to parentally bereaved young adults, but bereaved college students in general. Other studies specifically examining the loss of a parent include teens with this young adult population (see Greeff & Human, 2004; Schultz, 2007; Wolchik, Coxe, Tein, Sandler, & Ayers, 2008) or examine a broad age group that encompasses teens, young adults, and middle-aged children (see Aquilino, 1994; Marks, Jun, & Song, 2007; Meshot & Leitner, 1992). Still others emphasize young or adolescent children (see Brent, Melhem, Donohoe, & Walker, 2009; Kalter, Lohnes, & Chasin, 2002; McLeod, 1991; Silverman, Baker, Cait, & Boerner, 2002). A few also focus on adult children in varied stages of adulthood when aging parents pass away, ranging from early adulthood to old age and not focusing on a particular age group (Balk & Vesta, 1998; Petersen & Rafuls, 1998; Scharlach, 1991; Umberson & Chen, 1994).

However, Schultz (2007) insisted that very little research speaks to the impact of parental death on a young adult's development. Clearly, bereavement can significantly hinder a young adult's personal growth and development (Taub & Servaty-Seib, 2008) and academic performance (Servaty-Seib & Hamilton, 2006), so why are these "hidden grievers" (Balk & Vesta, 1998, p. 24) on college campuses unacknowledged?

Furthermore, "A parent's gender may be the most important social characteristic in determining inter-generational relationship salience" (Umberson & Chen, 1994, p. 154). Although sex may affect grief following the loss of a parent (Lawrence et al., 2005; Marks, Jun, & Song, 2007), very little of the current research relates the sex of children to the sex of the parent in assessing grief (Aquilino, 1994; Brent et al., 2009; Kalter et al., 2002; Lawrence et al., 2005; Marks et al., 2007; McLeod, 1991; Meshot & Leitner, 1992; Petersen & Rafuls, 1998; Scharlach, 1991; Umberson & Chen, 1994). McLeod (1991) also noted that few researchers have explored how the death of a parent may affect adult outcomes (marital relationships, depression, etc.) between sexes.

<center>Sex Differences in the Expressions of Grief</center>

Age. Sex differences in grief may emerge early. Brent, Melhem, Donohoe, and Walker (2009) showed that 9 to 21 months after a parent's death, depression was 3 times more prevalent in youth (ages 7-25) who had lost a mother when compared to those who had lost a father. Additionally, in Kalter et al.'s (2002) study, parent reports showed that older boys (ages 12-16) experienced more distress after losing a parent than either younger boys (ages 4-11) or girls (ages 4-16).

Age may be an important component to grief in adult children, as well. Meshot and Leitner (1992) noted that when compared with an adult sample, a group of adolescents and

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young adults (ages 18-27) experienced more shock, disbelief, sleeping difficulties, dreaming activity, anger toward the deceased, and irritability after the death of a parent, particularly young adult women. Young people seemed to feel a greater sense of loss, as well (Meshot & Leitner, 1992). Additionally, Scharlach (1991) found that reactions to losing a mother were more severe in younger adult children, and residual grief was more severe after the death of either parent when adult children were less autonomous. In particular, college students who are still dependent on parents may experience significant distress (Taub & Servaty-Seib, 2008). Such research suggests that grief is less severe as children grow older and more independent.

Psychological and physical responses. Research demonstrates that just as parental relationships are different between family members, so are expressions of grief (Marks et al., 2007; McLeod, 1991; Meshot & Leitner, 1992; Umberson & Chen, 1994). As an illustration, a mother's death has been associated with significantly more psychological distress (Lawrence et al., 2005; Umberson & Chen, 1994), while those grieving a father have shown much higher alcohol consumption (Umberson & Chen, 1994).

These psychological and behavioral reactions may parallel the literature on grief in sons and daughters, although previous research is unclear. Some studies suggest that women are more likely to experience a decline in psychological well-being (Marks et al., 2007) or a higher rate of depression (McLeod, 1991). One study showed that young women experienced more grief than their male counterparts and were more likely to feel close to the deceased, even becoming more like them (Meshot & Leitner, 1992). Indeed, children may emulate parents as a way of holding on to their legacy, although this practice can be developmentally maladaptive in some cases (Silverman, 2003). Men, on the other hand, have reported a decline in physical health over time (Marks et al., 2007) and no increases in depression (McLeod, 1991).

In contrast to this research, Umberson and Chen (1994) found that both daughters and sons reported a degeneration of their physical health after the loss of either parent. Conversely, Lawrence et al. (2006) found no sex differences in psychological distress among parentally bereaved college students. These discrepancies may be a result of age differences, sampling practices, the specific parent lost, or the measures used in each study; regardless, the lack of consistency highlights a need for additional research in these areas.

Same-sex versus cross-sex dyads. Each of the same-sex and cross-sex dyads of the parent-child relationship (father-daughter, mother-daughter, father-son, and mother-son) are distinct and display different characteristics than the others (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). Some of these differences were explored previously (e.g., closeness, conflict, or changes in the relationship). Although Lawrence et al. (2005) found no interactions between sex of child and sex of parent among parentally bereaved college students, other research has shown that children may indeed experience or express grief differently in each dyad (Aquilino, 1994; Marks et al., 2007; McLeod, 1991; Scharlach, 1991; Umberson, 1992). Marks et al. (2007) in particular found that the death of the same-sex parent affects children more negatively and voiced the importance of further research examining these relationships.

Aquilino (1994) examined grief in young adult and adult children (ages 19-34) and found that sons and daughters remained close with widowed mothers, but relationships with fathers declined, particularly among daughters. This may reflect that adult children and their widowed fathers have difficulty "with the practical side of the relationship," (Aquilino, 1994, p. 919) such as initiating phone calls or coordinating visits. However, consistent with stronger relationships in same-sex dyads, the death of a parent also related to decreases in support for the cross-sex child (e.g., support between fathers and daughters deteriorated after a mother's death). Overall,

this could suggest a stronger mother-child relationship or closer relationships within same-sex dyads (Aquilino, 1994).

Umberson and Chen (1994) suggested that adult sons' coping mechanisms may parallel those of their fathers. These researchers examined how such difficulties as violence, functional impairment, and alcohol in the home affected bereavement in adult children. When a father had experienced mental health issues, sons exhibited more psychological distress than other grievers. Alcohol consumption also increased among sons who remembered their fathers as having a drinking problem. Daughters in similar situations, however, seemed to perceive the loss differently, as they showed improved functioning or no change after the death (Umberson & Chen, 1994, p. 165).

Conversely, Umberson and Chen (1994) found that sons experienced more distress after losing a functionally impaired mother, while women experienced more distress in grieving an unimpaired mother, perhaps due to caregiving guilt or stress, respectively. They also noted that daughters reacted more negatively, including more alcohol consumption, when their mother had been violent. Such differences in the expressions of grief may mirror parent-child relationship quality prior to the death (Umberson & Chen, 1994). Depending on the situation and the child's home life, adult children may feel that a threat has disappeared, a burden has been lifted, or their role model/example is gone.

McLeod (1991) also noted that differences in grief responses between men and women may not necessarily imply less grief among men, but simply a sex disparity in the *style* of the grief response. However, upon further analyses, alcohol/drug use, physical health, and antisocial behavior after parental loss were still only significant in women (McLeod, 1991). Additionally, Scharlach (1991) found that initial reactions after losing a father were stronger among daughters

(ages 35-60) than sons. Clearly, more research is needed to clarify these differences and the contexts in which they occur.

Alcohol consumption. In addition to the differences in alcohol consumption within dyads just mentioned, Umberson and Chen (1994) found that adult daughters in close contact with fathers drank more alcohol after a father's death, while the opposite was true for sons. This positive health change in sons may reflect sons' new awareness of their mortality (Umberson & Chen, 1994). Marks et al. (2007) also found that women were more likely to engage in binge drinking after a mother's death, while men were more likely to exhibit binge drinking after losing both parents. These discrepancies may further highlight gendered patterns of grieving or differences in the meaning of the parent-child relationship.

Qualitative perspectives. Petersen and Rafuls (1998) found that, for a sample of adult women who had recently lost a parent, the grieving process was "a turning point" (p. 501). Participants in the study transitioned into a new role as leaders for the next generation with new responsibilities. The women often experienced renewed strength, improved relationships, and newfound freedom as a result of the grief process, as well as frustration and subsequent detachment from the remaining parent. The authors also observed the women feeling a sense of duty, as though they were "doing the right thing" (Petersen & Rafuls, 1998, p. 514), perhaps as a means of continuing their parents' legacy, finding approval, or making atonement. Overall, this process caused each woman to reevaluate their relationships, priorities, and lifestyles in a monumental way (Petersen & Rafuls, 1998).

Schultz (2007) also examined grief among young adult women who had lost their mother between the ages of 15 and 20. The loss of such a key figure resulted in huge changes for the young women, including new roles and responsibilities, as well as changes in their relationships

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with fathers (some becoming closer and others becoming detached). The loss of a maternal figure also set these women apart from their peers, eliminating their sense of belonging. Participants noted the importance of feeling emotionally connected again, especially with older female role models, although many continued to feel the influence of their mothers. Each young woman eventually integrated the loss into a new identity. Some participants expressed more religion/spirituality, and the young women also noted acquiring wisdom, perspective, independence, emotional expression, maturity, and "a deeper sense of gratitude and appreciation for life" (Schultz, 2007, p. 31). Indeed, retaining a connection with the deceased is critical in children's grief processes, particularly as it maintains the parent's legacy (Silverman, 2003).

Young Adult Sex Roles and Grief

Having discussed parent-child relationships and the expressions of grief within these dyads, it is also necessary to examine the influence of gender itself. Socialized roles may have a significant effect on parent-child relationships and, in turn, on grief.

At the same time, mothers and fathers have been socialized to their gender-specific roles. These parental roles carry with them different expectations about behaviors and attitudes and may influence interactions with children. Furthermore, because the meanings of father and mother in our culture are conceptually distinct, these meanings may influence how children identify and perceive their parental relationships. Mothers are typically seen as nurturing and understanding; fathers are perceived as powerful and deserving of respect. (Thornton, Orbuch, & Axinn, 1995, pp. 539-540)

Sexual identity is comprised of a sex/gender role, a gender identity, and a sexual orientation (Petersen, Leffert, & Graham, 1995). This study will focus on sex/gender roles, which emphasize society's values and expectations (Petersen et al., 1995).

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Regarding gender roles, two distinct belief systems emerge. In a traditional gender role, wives stay home and take care of children, while husbands provide for the family. Each depends on the other, yet there are "differential power relations implied" (Rogers & Amato, 2000, p. 735). Nontraditional roles, on the other hand, advocate husbands and wives earning two separate incomes, contributing to parenting tasks together, and sharing control (Rogers & Amato, 2000).

White and Tyson-Rawson's (1995) review notes that gender influences permeate relationships in every family. Spouses bring their respective ideals into a partnership; values are subsequently passed down to children, who absorb them into their own identity. The cycle continues as children have families of their own (White & Tyson-Rawson, 1995). According to Rogers and Amato (2000), later generations of married couples reported more egalitarian gender roles than earlier generations but have been shown to experience significantly more marital discord, partially because of more work-family conflicts.

Katz-Wise, Priess, and Hyde (2010) also noted that cultural expectations that men and women be providers and mothers, respectively, may have a significant influence on parents' gender role attitudes. It follows that the same would be true within families as parents influence a child's concept of gender.

Although sexual identity emerges in childhood, it is most prominent during adolescence (Petersen et al., 1995). Additionally, research shows differences in self-acceptance between adolescent boys and girls depending on their sex-role behaviors; Petersen et al.'s (1995) review noted that it is generally more socially acceptable for adolescent girls than adolescent boys to possess opposite-sex or androgynous characteristics. Similarly, according to Galligan, Barnett, Brennan and Israel's (2010) review, when adolescent and young adult men experienced increased gender role conflict, they were less resilient and exhibited more problematic behaviors.

Resilience suffered most when men felt reluctance or fear in expressing emotions (Galligan, Barnett, Brennan & Israel, 2010).

Gender roles are critical to understanding individuals, and there are different theories to consider while examining gender. White and Tyson-Rawson's (1995) review provided several examples. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the individual as well as cultural significance of behaviors. Social and cognitive-behavioral psychology asserts that an individual's beliefs and prior experiences influence their expectations for others. Narrative family therapy calls for us to understand how labels, names, and stories in our lives reflect gender (White & Tyson-Rawson, 1995). Clearly gender impacts our sense of self and our relationships with others.

Rationale for the Present Study

Petersen and Rafuls (1998) suggested that much of the bereavement research up to this point has primarily studied "losses of a more dependent nature…in which the deceased was an integral part of the survivor's daily existence" (Petersen & Rafuls, 1998, p. 494), such as a spouse or child or a young child losing a parent. The authors further noted that comparatively little research has been conducted on the adult child's grief process (Petersen & Rafuls, 1998).

The present study sought to help fill this gap in the literature by examining grief among adults, including college students, specifically ages 18 to 49. This study explored how young adults in particular respond to the death of a parent when considering both age and sex. As shown in the literature, they are developing an identity independent of their parents and discovering their own place in the world (Balk & Vesta, 1998; Samuolis, Layburn, & Schiaffino, 2001; Schultz, 2007). Roles may change as parents become peers or mentors, contact may decrease, and relationship salience may decline, but the relationship remains significant (Amato,

1994; Proulx & Helms, 2008; Roberts & Bengtson, 1993; Thornton, Orbuch, & Axinn, 1995; White, 1994) .

Furthermore, the study examined how sex of the parent, sex of the child, and the gender role of each individual influence grief. The research suggests a deep gendered connection between children and parents, particularly mothers and daughters, and suggests that children will feel a need to continue a legacy. There may be more severe grief after the loss of a same-sex parent based on the closeness of the same-sex dyads reflected in the literature. Conversely, the loss of a mother may lead to more severe grief based on the intimacy of the mother-child relationship. Daughters may be particularly affected, given the emphasis on social relationships seen in women.

Additionally, young men and women socialized into traditional gender roles may have more difficulty grieving the loss of a same-sex parent, while those brought up in more egalitarian roles may grieve either parent relatively equally. Whether the bereaved young adult identifies with traditional or egalitarian gender roles could have serious impacts on which parent's death leads to more severe feelings of loss.

Measures examined the gender roles of each young adult child, as well as their recent experience with grief following the loss of a parent, while taking into consideration time since the death and sex role preferences. I was interested in examining how the participant's sex (and identification with gendered characteristics) influences bereavement, particularly in regards to the death of a same-sex parent. If scores on the Scanzoni Sex Roles Measure (revised from 1975a, 1975b, 1976, 1978; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980) indicate thinking in traditionally gendered ways, young adults may identify with their parent of the same sex, perhaps causing more intense or prolonged grief. Levels of grief are unexplored in this area and will allow for

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more appropriate and effective interventions in this population, particularly for young adult undergraduate or graduate students on college campuses.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. Based on the available literature supporting increased relationship salience among females than males, it was hypothesized that overall, young adult women will report more grief than young adult men after the death of a parent.

Hypothesis 2. I also expected that young adults will express more grief after losing a mother than losing a father. This reflects the closeness of the mother-child relationship over the father-child relationship as suggested by the current research literature.

Hypothesis 3. I expected that grief will be strongest within the mother-daughter dyad. This hypothesis combines the idea that women place more emphasis on relationships and that the mother-child relationship is strongest.

Hypothesis 4. Due to relationship salience within dyads, I hypothesized that individuals who express traditional gender roles will experience more intense grief after the death of their same-sex parent, while those who identify with egalitarian roles will find the loss of a mother to be more difficult.

METHOD

Participants

Of 180 respondents, 77 were male (43% of the sample) and 102 were female (57% of the sample). Respondents ranged from age 18 to age 49 ($M = 23.63$ years). Almost three-quarters (71%) of the sample was between the ages of 18 and 24. Approximately 80% were single ($n = 144$), 17% were married ($n = 31$), and 3% ($n = 5$) were separated or divorced. Respondents had lost their parents at a variety of ages, from infancy to age 46. Average age across respondents at time of parental death was 18 years, but just over 57% of respondents had lost a parent between the ages of 16 and 26. Seventy respondents (39%) had lost their mother, while 107 (60%) had lost their father. Parents were between the ages of 23 and 75 when they died ($M = 48.17$ years).

Participants were undergraduate students and/or friends of students from classes taught by my faculty mentor between 2003 and 2010. Students could earn extra credit in their respective courses by participating in a wide variety of research opportunities, including submittal of the completed surveys used in this study. Students who had lost a parent completed the questionnaires used for this study themselves; if students' parents were both still living, they were encouraged to give the surveys to friends or coworkers who had lost a parent. Participants were primarily parentally bereaved young adults between the ages of 18 and 30, although a few middle-aged adults were also included.

Measures

Each participant provided information such as his or her sex, current age, age at the time of the parent's death, which parent passed away, and cause of death. The students further provided Likert-type ratings for how involved the parent was in aspects of their life. Questions probed how much the parent influenced the young adult's religious beliefs, selection of

significant other/spouse, personal values and morals, choice of education/career, and choice of friends in an effort to create an overall Extent of Influence measure. Ratings to assess the young adult's relationship with a stepparent were included, as well. The students then completed standardized questionnaires that included the Scanzoni Sex Roles Measure (revised from 1975a, 1975b, 1976, 1978; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980) and the Bereavement Experience Questionnaire (BEQ-24; Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998).

Students turned in surveys in sealed envelopes with the participant's contact information on the outer envelope. Surveys without this contact information were not accepted. Random surveys from each student were chosen for verification; those participants not enrolled in the class were contacted via phone to ensure the participant had received the survey, completed it themselves, and felt no undue pressure from the student. Contact information for participants was separated from the survey and destroyed prior to data analysis.

Scanzoni Sex Roles Measure. Scanzoni (1975a) used factor analysis to create items measuring both men's and women's preferences for either sex role modernity or traditionalism. Scanzoni (1978) also noted that these terms are not intended to ascribe values or connote judgments.

Greater role modernity is indicated or defined as stronger preferences for the wife's individualistic interests. Role traditionalism is defined as weaker preferences for wife's individualistic benefits and, instead, greater concern for the interests of husband and children (or familistic interests). (Scanzoni, 1975a, p. 131; Scanzoni, 1976, p. 44)

Scanzoni (1978) asserted that preferences for modernity or traditionalism fall along a continuum. Husbands and wives may wish for significant gender differentiation or conversely, for more interchangeability in tasks, behaviors, or desires, both inside and outside the home (Scanzoni,

1978).   Thirty items comprised eight dimensions, although dimensions are divided between a

husband-wife sex role preferences scale and a mother-father sex role preferences scale.

Husband-wife sex role preferences. Scanzoni (1975a; 1975b; 1976) created two

dimensions relating to the wife role. The first dimension, Traditional Wife, contains eight items

emphasizing that the husband's and children's needs are more important than the wife's needs

(Scanzoni, 1975a, 1975b, 1976). A high score on this dimension indicates traditionalist views.

This contrasts with the second dimension, Wife Self-Actualization, which has four (two utilized

in this study) items asserting equality between a wife and her family (Scanzoni, 1975a, 1975b,

1976). High scores in this dimension assert beliefs in modernity.

Three of Scanzoni's (1975a; 1975b; 1976) additional dimensions pertain to the husband's

role. Problematic Husband Alterations reflect "the tentative, temporary, and problematic

alterations that a husband *might* make in connection with a wife's occupational efforts"

(Scanzoni, 1975a, p. 132; Scanzoni, 1976, p. 44). Five items place importance on the husband

over the wife, but give the option of equality between a working wife and a working husband. A

fourth dimension, Institutionalized Husband-Wife Equality contains two items naming non-

traditional behaviors that a husband might use to support a working wife. High scores in either

of these dimensions indicate attitudes of modernity. Finally, Traditional Husband Role has two

items stating highly traditional views of a father's position of leadership within the family

(Scanzoni, 1975a, 1975b, 1976). High scores in this dimension represent traditional views.

Mother-father sex role preferences. Scanzoni (1975a; 1975b; 1976) also created a

Traditional Mother dimension asserting that children's needs come before their mother's. Three

of the original five questions in this dimension were incorporated into the questionnaire for this

study. Although this dimension was originally published as true/false (Scanzoni, 1975a, 1975b,

1976), these options were replaced with Likert-type responses to maintain consistency throughout the measure. An additional dimension, Religious Legitimation of the Mother Role (Scanzoni, 1975a, 1975b, 1976), measures "the degree of sacredness attached to marital and familial patterns" (Scanzoni, 1975a, p. 133; Scanzoni, 1976, p. 45) and was excluded for the purposes of this study.

As previously mentioned, these seven dimensions reflect the roles of husband, wife, and mother (Scanzoni, 1975). To round out the questionnaire and include the role of father, this study utilized Scanzoni and Szinovacz's (1980) additional questions assessing the father role. These seven items give a variety of behaviors and beliefs reflecting both traditional and modern sex roles.

Respondents indicated level of agreement with items on a Likert-type scale (Scanzoni, 1975a), with 1 representing *completely disagree* and 4 representing *completely agree*. Items advocating traditionalism were reverse-coded. Responses were then summed to gain scores in each area (Scanzoni, 1975a; Scanzoni, 1976), such that scores represented the degree to which each participant expressed an attitude of sex role modernity.

Finally, the Scanzoni Sex Roles Measure demonstrated appropriate validity. The husband-wife sex role preferences scale gave a Chronbach's alpha of .82 for this study, while the mother-father sex role preferences scale gave a Chronbach's alpha of .78.

Bereavement Experience Questionnaire. The original Bereavement Experience Questionnaire (BEQ; Demi, 1984; Demi & Schroeder, 1987, 1989, as cited in Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998) assesses thoughts and emotions associated with grief. Sixty-seven items comprise eight theoretically-formulated subscales, including Guilt (19 items), Yearning (10 items), Anger (9 items), Meaninglessness (8 items), Morbid Fear (6 items), Stigma (6 items),

Depersonalization (5 items), and Isolation (4 items) (Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998; Hayslip,

Ragow-O'Brien, & Guarnaccia, 1998).

According to Guarnaccia and Hayslip (1998), printed instructions state:

On the left side of the page are thoughts and feelings that bereaved people sometimes

have. Read the item on the left, then in the right column circle *how often* you have

experienced this thought or feeling *in the past month, including today.* (p. 308)

Respondents answer questions such as "Yearned for the deceased person;" "Thought I was

losing my mind;" "Felt life has no meaning;" "Thought I contributed to the death;" "Felt angry at

the deceased person;" "Lost interest in my work;" "Was preoccupied with thought of deceased

person;" and "Felt a need to be emotionally close to someone." Response choices are ratings 1-

4, with 1 meaning *never* and 4 meaning *almost always.* Higher ratings indicate increased levels

of grief and poorer adjustment (Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998; Hayslip et al., 1998).

According to Demi and Schroeder (1989; as cited in Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998), the

original BEQ subscales demonstrated internal consistency reliabilities of .70 to .84 with over 60

individuals grieving a loss up to five years previously. When utilized within a sample of over

400 bereaved adults mourning a friend's or relative's death in the prior two years, the BEQ

exhibited an alpha of .95 (Hayslip & Ragow-O'Brien, 1998). Lang and Gottlieb (1993) found

internal consistencies ranging from .65 to .88 after utilizing the BEQ with couples who had

experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth, or loss of an infant less than one year old.

Demi (1984; as cited in Hayslip et al., 1998) reported that construct validity coefficients

vary between .30 and .70 for the eight subscales. Similarly, in their review of the original

measure, Guarnaccia and Hayslip (1998) reported that the BEQ has adequate criterion-related

and construct validity. They further note appropriate face and content validity. However, these

authors also suggest that the measure has not been adequately empirically validated, that the number of items in each subscale is not properly balanced, and that the measure may be unnecessarily long and redundant. The authors subsequently developed and introduced an empirically-based short form with only 24 items (Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998).

This revised BEQ, the BEQ-24 (Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998) is based on a factor analysis of the original measure and contains only three subscales—Existential Loss/Emotional Needs, Guilt/Blame/Anger, and Preoccupation with Thoughts of Deceased. The first subscale, Existential Loss/Emotional Needs, measures aspects relating to a lack of purpose or motivation, detached behaviors and emotions, as well as a need for intimacy. According to the authors, "this subscale reflects the often ambivalent and contradictory nature of grief, i.e., needing others yet feeling distant from them" (Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998, pp. 312-313). The second subscale, Guilt/Blame/Anger, "can be understood as facets holding either the self, others, or the deceased responsible for the death" (p. 313). Finally, the subscale measuring Preoccupation with Thoughts of the Deceased evaluates the extent to which the griever still identifies with and holds on to the deceased. The BEQ-24 also assesses both primary and secondary grief (Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998).

Guarnaccia and Hayslip (1998) distributed the BEQ-24 as part of a questionnaire packet to over 400 adults who had attended a funeral of a close friend or relative within the last two years. BEQ-24 results from almost 300 adults in three additional studies were then used as a cross-validation sample. Within this sample of over 700 individuals, the individual subscales showed alpha internal consistency reliabilities ranging from .81 to .86. As a whole, the BEQ-24 demonstrated an internal consistency of .91 (Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998). The revised version was selected for use with this study.

Design

Independent variables in this experimental design included each participant's sex and the

sex of the deceased parent. Each of these independent variables has two possible values—male

or female. A third variable, used as a covariate, is each participant's acceptance of

egalitarianism, as reported on the Scanzoni Sex Roles Measure (revised from 1975a, 1975b,

1976, 1978; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980). The dependent variable is the overall rating of grief

as expressed on the BEQ-24, as well as the three subscales (Guarnaccia & Hayslip, 1998),

wherein higher responses represented higher levels of grief, controlling for time since the death

of the parent and sex role preferences.

RESULTS

Several analyses were conducted to examine the first three hypotheses. First, a 2x2 ANCOVA was run to examine how sex affected overall expressions of grief after parental loss. Independent variables were sex of the child and sex of the parent. Dependent variable in this analysis was the participant's total score on the revised Bereavement Experience Questionnaire. Time since the parental death and sex role orientation were used as covariates.

Overall, the main effect of sex of the child was statistically significant at the multivariate level, $F(2, 153) = 3.86$, $p = .023$; Wilks lambda $= .95$; partial eta squared $= .05$. When evaluating dependent variables separately at the univariate level, sex of the child was significant in impacting BEQ total scores, $F(1, 154) = 6.90$, $p = .009$; partial eta squared $= .04$. Females scored higher than males, which supported the study's first hypothesis that women would express more grief than men (see Tables 1, 2, and 4).

There were no main effects for sex of deceased parent at the multivariate level of analysis. This led to rejection of the study's second hypothesis that children would express more grief after the loss of a mother (see Tables 3 and 4).

Interaction of sex of the parent and sex of the child, however, was also significant at the multivariate level, $F(2, 153) = 3.07$, $p = .049$; Wilks lambda $= .96$ partial eta squared $= .05$. Examining this interaction indicated that daughters express more grief after the loss of a mother, although neither dependent variable was significant. This provided support for the study's third hypothesis, which stated that more grief would be expressed within the mother-daughter dyad (see Tables 2 and 4).

Mother/father sex role preferences were significant at the multivariate level ($F(2, 153)$ = 4.39, p = .014; Wilks lambda = .95; partial eta squared = .05) in influencing total BEQ scores, $F(1, 154)$ = 6.83, p = .01, partial eta squared = .04 (see Table 5).

A similar 2x2 MANCOVA was also conducted to examine how sex affected more specific aspects of grief and adjustment. Independent variables were sex of the child and sex of the parent. Dependent variables were the three BEQ subscales (BEQ-Existential/Emotional, BEQ-Preoccupation, BEQ-Guilt/Blame/Anger). To maintain consistency, time since the death and sex role preferences were used as covariates.

Results showed that although parent's sex was not significant (confirming rejection of the study's second hypothesis), sex of the child was again statistically significant, $F(10, 145)$ = 2.09, p = .029, partial eta squared = .13. In examining the dependent variables separately, sex of child was significant for the BEQ Preoccupation subscale, $F(1, 154)$ = 15.77, $p < .001$; partial eta squared = .09. Females had significantly higher scores, supporting the study's first hypothesis (see Tables 1, 2, and 4). No interactions were found at the multivariate level during subscale score analyses.

Although not significant at the multivariate level, exploratory analyses showed that sex of the deceased parent was significant at the univariate level in impacting scores on the Preoccupation subscale of the BEQ, $F(1, 154)$ = 4.07, p = .045, partial eta squared = .03. This suggests that children who lost a mother maintained ties with the deceased to a greater extent than those who lost a father (see Tables 3 and 4).

Within subscales, exploratory analyses at the univariate level demonstrated both husband/wife sex role preferences ($F(1, 154)$ = 4.83, p = .029; partial eta squared = .03) and mother/father sex role preferences ($F(1, 154)$ = 8.53, p = .004, partial eta squared = .05) were

significant at the univariate level in predicting scores on the Existential/Emotional subscale of the BEQ (see Table 5).

Correlations were selected to examine relationships between the aforementioned sex role preferences and any impacted measures of grief (see Table 5). Findings indicated small negative relationships between sex role preferences and expressions of grief, suggesting that as young adults demonstrated more egalitarian beliefs, feelings of grief decreased. Although most results were insignificant, findings were significant ($r = -.16$, $p = .029$) for mother/father sex role preferences and the Existential/Emotional subscale of the BEQ.

DISCUSSION

Sex of the Child

The main effect of sex of the child was statistically significant in impacting total

Bereavement Experience Questionnaire scores and BEQ-Preoccupation subscale scores, with

females scoring higher than males. Examined in context, these results suggest that when

compared to men, women have a deeper emotional experience of grief in response to parental

loss. Findings also support the study's first hypothesis in that young adult women report

experiencing more grief than young adult men after the death of a parent. This is consistent with

some prior research in noting differences in emotional expressions of grief between men and

women (Marks et al., 2007; McLeod, 1991; Meshot & Leitner, 1992).

Expressions of grief among women. As is commonly reported in the literature, men and

women are generally socialized to deal with emotion differently. Women are usually encouraged

to express feelings, while men are often taught to withhold emotion (see Levant, 1996; Nolen-

Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001) Levant's (1996) review notes that mothers, fathers, and peer groups

contribute to disparities between the socialization of men and women beginning in infancy and

lasting through adulthood. This author also suggests that men may not be as aware of their

emotional experience and may express anger in place of more vulnerable emotions. It follows

that women could be more willing to acknowledge vulnerable emotions (see Nolen-Hoeksema &

Jackson, 2001).

Indeed, grief encompasses a wide variety of emotions that are manifested differently

among bereaved individuals (Shaver & Tancredy, 2001). Although other research has found no

gender differences in the expressions of grief among parentally bereaved young adults

(Lawrence et al., 2005), results of the current study highlight differences between men and

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women. Findings suggest that women have a more intense emotional experience, particularly in maintaining bonds with the deceased.

Such reactions are not necessarily maladaptive. In fact, bereaved individuals in general need a healthy continuing bond with the deceased in order to resolve the loss and move on (see Field, 2008). Emotionality can also be beneficial in the grief process, potentially enabling women in particular to be more willing or better equipped to handle the emotions associated with grief (DeSpelder & Strickland, 2005). Indeed, women's emphasis on relationships and reaching out for support may encourage positive coping skills in many cases. The loss of a parent and resulting grief experience may even lead to personal growth (Schaefer & Moos, 2001).

Furthermore, the intensity of one's grief does not necessarily reflect unhealthy grief or the quality of the relationship with the deceased, but often the influence of a range of other variables. For example, the intensity and expression of grief is largely influenced by culture. Indeed, "culture creates, influences, shapes, limits, and defines grieving, sometimes profoundly" (Rosenblatt, 2008, p. 208). Cultural expectations for when grief is appropriate, how it is expressed, and what it means for individuals vary widely (for a review, see Rosenblatt, 2008).

However, individuals who experience deeply intense grief (e.g., catastrophizing, crying hysterically) outside of a culturally appropriate context are often unable to resolve the loss and may actually experience more distress for a longer period of time (i.e., months and years; see Nolen-Hoeksema, Parker, & Larson, 1994; Shaver & Tancredy, 2001). This inability to resolve the loss, known as prolonged or complicated grief (Drescher & Foy, 2010), means that the survivor is unable to deal with the emotions surrounding the death or move on with their own life (Kastenbaum, 2009).

These intense expressions of grief may in some cases come to include such negative tendencies as rumination, a maladaptive thought pattern that entails consistently thinking and worrying about one's negative emotions and being unable to effectively cope with or control them (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001; Nolen-Hoeksema, Larson, & Grayson, 1999; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1994). Moreover, rumination may be one contributor to this study's findings that women reported more preoccupations with the deceased than men.

With regard to grief, Nolen-Hoeksema (2001) asserts that rumination may be a way for the individual to search for meaning in the loss or hold on to the deceased. In her extensive research on rumination, this author found that rumination negatively affects one's ability to complete everyday tasks, solve problems, make decisions, and often leads to criticism or rejection from others. Additionally, ruminating frequently leads to more negative symptoms (e.g., increased depression, anxiety and anger) as part of a self-perpetuating cycle (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1999; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1994). Eliminating the rumination would likely increase social support (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1994) and allow the individual to feel more confident, positive, and controlled (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001).

In this context, the current study's findings may suggest more emotionality among women, a larger emphasis on relationships, as well as more of an inclination to accept, acknowledge, and/or report their emotional experience. However, results also suggest a potential for more negative tendencies such as rumination among bereaved women when compared to men. Indeed, research confirms that rumination seems to be a significant issue among women (Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1999; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1994) and may explain females' higher scores on many of this study's grief measures, particularly the Preoccupation subscale of the BEQ. Consistent with the cultural values

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previously discussed, Nolen-Hoeksema and Jackson's (2001) review noted that women are much more sensitive to the emotional underpinnings of their relationships, often taking responsibility for maintaining positive interactions. Women are also more likely to see important events and negative emotions as beyond their control. All of these beliefs have been found to contribute to rumination (see Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001).

Research also notes that women maintain stronger emotional bonds with parents than men during the college years (Lapsley et al., 1989). Furthermore, bereaved college students often feel excluded and alone (see Balk & Vesta, 1998; Servaty-Seib & Hamilton, 2006). Social support is critical in resolving grief (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1994), yet this sense of isolation likely exacerbates a vulnerability for rumination after losing a prevalent attachment figure. Young adults with limited social support or who do not acknowledge a need for relationships as grief progresses may be at a disadvantage.

It is also interesting to note that in the current study, the third BEQ subscale, relating to existential and emotional issues, was the only BEQ subscale not impacted by sex of the child. This subscale demonstrates a lack of purpose or motivation, detached behaviors and emotions, as well as a need for intimacy. Data therefore suggests that both sons and daughters struggle with these issues relatively equally.

<p style="text-align:center">Sex of the Parent</p>

It was also hypothesized that young adults would express more grief after losing a mother. However, there were no main effects at the multivariate level for sex of the deceased parent. This suggests no significant differences in the expressions of grief for same-sex or cross-sex parents and is discrepant from the maternal bond explored in the literature, as well as prior bereavement research (Lawrence et al., 2005).

Exploratory analyses at the univariate level showed that, with covariates, sex of the deceased parent was significant in impacting scores on the Preoccupation subscale of the BEQ. Children grieving their mothers expressed higher ratings of grief, indicating that children (perhaps daughters in particular) experience a particularly emotional sense grief after a mother passes away. This may result from a strong maternal bond, modeling behaviors, socialized differences, or a maternal emphasis on relationships.

Grief within Dyads

In contrast with similar research (Lawrence et al., 2005), the interaction of sex of the parent and sex of the child was significant at the multivariate level. Results suggested that daughters grieving their mothers may express more grief than any other dyad, providing support for the third hypothesis that grief would be strongest within the mother-daughter dyad. However, the analysis revealed that no measures of grief were significantly impacted at the univariate level.

Sex Role Preferences

It was also hypothesized that individuals who express traditional gender roles would experience more intense grief after the death of their same-sex parent, while those who identify with egalitarian roles will find the loss of a mother to be more difficult. Multivariate analyses showed that mother/father sex role preferences were significant as a covariate in predicting total BEQ scores. Within subscales, exploratory analyses at the univariate level demonstrated both husband/wife sex role preferences and mother/father sex role preferences were significant in predicting scores on the Existential/Emotional subscale of the BEQ.

Further correlational analyses showed that only the association between sex role preferences and results for the Existential/Emotional subscale of the BEQ were significant,

indicating that sex role preferences among bereaved individuals have an impact on the emotional experience of grief and the process of finding meaning. In general, such findings indicate that having more egalitarian beliefs may relate to decreased expressions of grief, although other associations were not statistically significant. This may demonstrate that egalitarian-minded individuals are more flexible in their emotional experience and/or seek more support from the surviving parent.

<div align="center">Limitations of the Current Study</div>

The choice of measures utilized in this study constitute an important weakness in that they did not assess individuals' religiosity or cultural background. The nature of the study also excluded nontraditional families (e.g., Lesbian couples, single parent families). These variables are undoubtedly significant contributors to bereavement processes (see Rosenblatt, 2008), and examining their influence on expressions of grief could have greatly enriched our understanding of familial and cultural processes in bereavement. Measures also neglected the evaluation of more positive aspects of grief, such as meaning-making and personal growth. Indeed, intense grief may not necessarily signify unhealthy grief but rather simply reflect individual differences in healthy grieving.

Additionally, although the Scanzoni measure is derived from an interesting conceptual model, its status as a measure developed in the 1970s reflects certain cultural and historical constraints that may not be as applicable in society's belief systems today. Moreover, validity statistics for this version of the Scanzoni Sex Roles Measure are not available in the literature, reflecting a significant drawback for this measure.

In using a sample of volunteers, this study reflects inherent limitations relating to selectivity and convenience. For example, any university students who participated may differ

from young adults in the general population in such ways as socioeconomic status, family values, or cultural background. Additionally, undergraduate students desiring extra credit or drawn to participate in research may differ from those not interested in participating, perhaps in academic situations, openness to research, personality characteristics (e.g., altruism, curiosity, dedication), or personal experiences with grief. Any adults having more difficulty coping a parental loss may also have been more likely to volunteer. Finally, all items were of a self-report nature, leading to possible variations in subjective understanding, perceptions of personal grief, or willingness to report.

As this data was collected over a period of 5-8 years, some cohort effects may be present. Furthermore, the extent to which these results generalize to all young adult or adult children remains unclear. Young adult children attending college may demonstrate more autonomy than other young adult children, leading to less dependent relationships. However, the changes associated with this phase of life may also insinuate more maturity and closeness in the parent-child relationship. Additionally, adult children who have graduated from college or moved through the changes associated with young adulthood may show increased independence and autonomy.

Implications

Clinicians are encouraged to remember that a greater inclination to acknowledge or express emotions can be a significant strength for both sexes. Intense grief, more prevalent among women in this particular study, may not necessarily be an indicator of psychopathology or relationship quality, but simply an acknowledgment of the loss of a significant relationship. Indeed, individuals express grief in many different ways after a death, depending on a multitude of factors (e.g., religious, cultural).

Whether intense grief reflects more problematic issues in resolving a death such as rumination is a separate matter to be addressed. Clinicians must be aware of risk factors and vulnerabilities among bereaved individuals. If women experience more anxiety after a parental death or maintain stronger ties with the deceased, they may be at a higher risk for rumination or other negative tendencies. Additionally, a perceived lack of support among bereaved young adults on college campuses who already feel isolated (see Balk & Vesta, 1998; Servaty-Seib & Hamilton, 2006) could significantly hinder appropriate grieving and even encourage such negative tendencies as rumination.

In this light, instead of engaging clients, particularly females, in traditional "grief work," clinicians may wish to recommend or implement a more coping-focused model that emphasizes resolution of the loss, such as the dual process model of coping (see Stroebe & Schut, 1999). This method encourages the bereaved individual to find a balance between taking time to grieve (loss-oriented coping) and attending to matters of daily living (restoration-oriented coping). Therapy therefore focuses on proactive resolution rather than dwelling on the loss (for a review, see Stroebe & Schut, 1999) This approach may be a more appropriate response to depression and rumination, particularly among young adult women. Whether such dynamics apply to men is both an empirical questions as well as one influenced by their willingness to reveal emotional difficulties in coping with the death of a parent.

Future Directions

Family systems. Greeff and Human (2004) asserted that individual characteristics, such as personality, acceptance, optimism, or reaching out to others, act together with family processes in influencing grieving the loss of a family member. More specifically, their research found that social support from friends and relatives was the first line of support for grieving

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families, followed by support (e.g., emotional support) within the family. This highlights the need to study family dynamics as a moderator of grief. Highly supportive, hardy, or resilient families will likely fare better than more inflexible or uncooperative families in their respective grief processes (see Greeff & Human, 2004). Additionally, clinicians should keep in mind that family members often try to make meaning from the death (see Nadeau, 2008). Thus, resulting grief may be a product of not only age, sex, depressive symptoms, tendency for rumination, age, and sex roles, but also familial support and processing. Although I was unable to examine family influence, this study's findings may suggest more grief among daughters because of an unmet emotional need from surviving fathers.

Cause of death. The current study was also unable to examine cause of death as a moderator of grief. However, this is likely an important factor in understanding bereavement. For example, anticipatory grief is a response to an impending death (DeSpelder & Strickland, 2005). Such a situation can be advantageous in giving a family more time to invest in relationships and make decisions; however, it can also mean more time to experience anxiety and stress (Kastenbaum, 2009). For these reasons, there is some controversy whether this awareness makes grieving easier than if the death is unexpected (see DeSpelder & Strickland, 2005; Hayslip & Ragow-O'Brien, 1998).

On the other hand, research notes a general consensus that such negative emotions as shock, guilt, and disbelief are more pervasive following a sudden death (see DeSpelder & Strickland, 2005; Hayslip & Ragow-O'Brien, 1998). When a loved one dies unexpectedly, survivors often seek answers and meaning in order to grieve, although this can be difficult (DeSpelder & Strickland, 2005; Drescher & Foy, 2010; Feigelman, Jordan, & Gorman, 2009). Meaning-making may enhance recovery and encourage personal growth; however, it also has the

capacity to impede recovery and instill a sense of despair (Drescher & Foy, 2010). Traumatic loss in particular puts survivors at a higher risk for prolonged or complicated grief, and the experiences and symptoms for prolonged/complicated grief may even overlap with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Drescher & Foy, 2010).

In addition to exploring familial support and cause of death, future research may wish to examine how women grieve and whether these techniques are truly adaptive. It is certainly in the best interest of researchers and clinicians alike to understand risk factors for complicated grief, socialization as it affects grief, and what effective coping practices entail for both sexes. Research may also explore the ways in which men grieve, how they differ from women, and how clinicians can best serve both populations.

Table 1

BEQ Scores of Young Adult Males by Sex of Deceased Parent

| | Young Adult Males | | | | | | | | |
| | Lost Mother | | | Lost Father | | | Total | | |
Measure	Mean	*SD*	Adj. M.	Mean	*SD*	Adj. M.	Mean	*SD*	Adj. M.
Existential/Emotional	1.92	0.50	1.85	1.83	0.64	1.82	1.86	0.59	1.83
Guilt/Blame/ Anger	1.61	0.46	1.56	1.53	0.46	1.52	1.56	0.46	1.54
Preoccupation	1.80	0.51	1.75	1.70	0.52	1.70	1.74	0.52	1.72
Total Score	1.77	0.40	1.72	1.68	0.46	1.67	1.72	0.44	1.69

Table 2

BEQ Scores of Young Adult Females by Sex of Deceased Parent

| | Young Adult Females | | | | | | | | |
| | Lost Mother | | | Lost Father | | | Total | | |
Measure	Mean	*SD*	Adj. M.	Mean	*SD*	Adj. M.	Mean	*SD*	Adj. M.
Existential/Emotional	2.01	0.70	2.03	1.82	0.55	1.86	1.89	0.60	1.94
Guilt/Blame/Anger	1.81	0.65	1.83	1.60	0.60	1.62	1.67	0.62	1.72
Preoccupation	2.34	0.93	2.36	1.95	0.67	1.97	2.08	0.79	2.16
Total Score	2.04	0.67	2.05	1.77	0.53	1.81	1.86	0.60	1.92

Table 3

BEQ Scores of Young Adult Children by Sex of Deceased Parent

	Sex of Parent							
	Lost Mother			Lost Father			Total	
Measure	Mean	*SD*	Adj. M.	Mean	*SD*	Adj. M.	Mean	*SD*
Existential/Emotional	1.97	0.61	1.94	1.83	0.59	1.84	1.88	0.60
Guilt/Blame/Anger	1.71	0.57	1.69	1.57	0.54	1.57	1.62	0.56
Preoccupation	2.08	0.80	2.05	1.84	0.62	1.83	1.93	0.70
Total Score	1.91	0.57	1.88	1.73	0.51	1.73	1.80	0.54

Table 4

F Values for Main Effects for Sex of Child, Main Effects for Sex of Parent, and Interaction

Effects	F	df	p	Eta^2
Main Effects for Sex of Adult Child				
Existential/Emotional	1.21	1, 154	.272	.01
Guilt/Blame/Anger	3.81	1, 154	.053	.02
Preoccupation	15.77	1, 154	<.001	.09
Total Score	6.90	1, 154	.009	.04
Main Effects for Sex of Adult Parent				
Existential/Emotional	1.12	1, 154	.291	.01
Guilt/Blame/Anger	1.84	1, 154	.177	.01
Preoccupation	4.07	1, 154	.045	.03
Total Score	3.01	1, 154	.085	.02
Interaction Effects				
Existential/Emotional	.58	1, 154	.446	<.01
Guilt/Blame/Anger	.80	1, 154	.374	.01
Preoccupation	2.35	1, 154	.128	.02
Total Score	1.41	1, 154	.236	.01

Table 5

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Sex Role Preferences and BEQ Scores

Measure	1	2	3	4	*M*	*SD*
1. Mother-father sex role modernity			-.11	-.16*	33.72	5.83
2. Husband-wife sex role modernity			-.03	-.04	62.95	7.86
3. Total BEQ Scores	-.11	-.03			1.81	0.53
4. Existential/Emotional	-.16*	-.04			1.90	0.60

* *p* < .05

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